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HISTORY OF MODERN PHILOSOPHY IN FRANCE

LUCIEN LEVY-BRUHL

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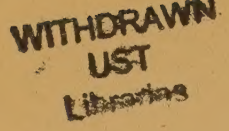

History of Modern Philosophy
in France

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BY

LUCIEN LÉVY-BRUHL

MAÎTRE DE CONFÉRENCES IN THE SORBONNE, PROFESSOR IN THE ÉCOLE LIBRE DES SCIENCES POLITIQUES

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PREFACE

A book ought to speak for itself, and the briefest prefaces are the best. Accordingly, I shall restrict myself to the few words indispensable to the purpose of indicating the object and the character of this work.

Given the intention of writing a History of Modern Philosophy in France, it was natural to begin it with Descartes, since by general consent Descartes opened a period in the history of philosophic thought, and this not simply for France, but for the world at large.

This History does not claim to be complete—that is to say, it does not consider all who have treated philosophical subjects in France from the beginning of the seventeenth century down to our days. Frequently, philosophers of lower rank and only moderate originality are not mentioned in it at all. The author did not wish to burden his book, already large enough, with a mass of necessarily dry and uninteresting information regarding philosophers who are little known, and deservedly so. And above all, he did not intend to write a

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work of erudition, but a history. Now, philosophers without marked originality—those, for instance, who were simply disciples of the masters—have indeed their value in the eyes of that erudition which wishes to know all there is to be known of a certain epoch. But their value is slight in the eyes of the historian. For he does not propose merely to perpetuate facts and dates; such information is but the raw material for his work, which consists chiefly in grasping the connection of facts, and in deducing the laws of the development of ideas and doctrines. This is why he must concentrate his attention upon the really representative men, and upon works which "have had a posterity."

While we have neglected the philosophical writers whose influence has been slight in the evolution of French thought, there are others, on the contrary, to whom we have given much space, although they are not usually grouped with the philosophers "by profession." Such are, for example, Pascal, Fontenelle, Voltaire, Renan, etc. We have had very strong reasons for this. Is it not too narrow a conception of the history of philosophy to see in it exclusively the logical evolution of successive systems? Doubtless this is one way of looking at it; but we can understand, also, that philosophic thought, even while having its especial and clearly

limited object, is closely involved in the life of each civilisation, and even in the national life of every people. In every age it acts upon the spirit of the times, which in turn reacts upon it. In its development it is solidary with the simultaneous development of the other series of social and intellectual phenomena, of positive science, of art, of religion, of literature, of political and economic life; in a word, the philosophy of a people is a function of its history. For instance, philosophic thought in France for the past two centuries bears almost altogether, though indirectly, upon the French Revolution. In the eighteenth century it is preparing and announcing it; in the nineteenth it is trying in part to check and in part to deduce the consequences of it.

It is proper, therefore, to introduce into our history of modern philosophy in France, along with the authors of systems distinctly recognised as such, those who have tried under a somewhat different form to synthesise the ideas of their time, and who have modified their direction, sometimes profoundly. Would that be a faithful history of philosophic thought in France which should exclude, apart from the names cited above, those of Montesquieu, Diderot, Rousseau, and Joseph de Maistre? The question is not, as it seems to me, whether they

should have a place, but what that place shall be? The reader will see that we have not been satisfied to take half steps, and the question has been settled in this volume in the most liberal spirit.

In closing, there remains the agreeable duty of expressing my best thanks, first of all, to the Open Court Publishing Company which offered a most kind and generous hospitality to this foreign work, then to Miss G. Coblence, the translator, and to Professor W. H. Carruth, of the University of Kansas, for his thorough revision of the translation.

PARIS, August, 1899. L. L.-B.

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CHAPTER I.

DESCARTES.

WITH Descartes a new period of modern philosophy begins. It is not, indeed, a beginning in a literal sense: there is no such thing in the history of ideas, nor elsewhere. Descartes, who came after the great scientific and philosophical illumination of the sixteenth century, had profited largely by it. He owed much to the Italian Renaissance, and not less to the Renaissance in France and in England. He was acquainted with the discoveries of contemporary men of science, such as Galileo, Torricelli, and Harvey. Even scholastic philosophy, which he was to combat, left a lasting impression upon his mind.

However, after we have considered all the influences, both of the past and of the present, which were exercised upon him, the originality of Descartes shines out all the more conspicuously, and we see the more clearly that he initiated a new philosophic method. Hegel called him a hero, and this hyperbole may in a certain sense be justified. Descartes had, indeed, no vocation for martyrdom. But nature had endowed him with that higher sort of courage which is love of truth and devotion to science; and if the name of hero is due the men whose

exertions have laid open new paths for human thought, Descartes is undoubtedly entitled to the name.

The attitude of Descartes toward the philosophers who preceded him is remarkable,—he deliberately ignores them. Although well acquainted with their works, he builds his own system as if he knew nothing of them. He wishes to depend solely on his own method and reason. Not that he personally holds in contempt either the ancient or the modern philosophers. He is not so presumptuous as to believe that his mind is superior to theirs. He even acknowledges that many truths had been discovered before he created his method, but these truths he does not wish to accept on tradition. He is determined to discover them for himself. By means of his method he proposes to obtain these truths, no longer mixed pell-mell with the mass of doubtful or erroneous opinions, but set in their right places, and accompanied with their proofs. Thus only do they become valuable and useful. For a truth, when isolated, sporadic, and floating and unconnected with the truths that have gone before it, and consequently powerless to develop those that are to come after it, is of slight interest in itself. To acquire such a truth is not worth the trouble we must take in order to understand ancient books, and the time we lose in learning the ancient languages. All this time were better employed in training our reason to grasp the necessary concatenation of truths as deducible one from another.

This is already a first motive, and a quite sufficient one, for Descartes to dispense with erudition and to take no account of traditional doctrine. But he has another and more weighty one. He seeks not what is probable, but what is true. Now the first requisite in finding what is true he takes to be the casting aside of the philosophy taught in his time, which contented itself with probability and gave no satisfactory demonstrations. Therefore, though he occasionally retains the vocabulary of scholasticism (for instance in the greater part of his *Méditations*), though he even borrows some of his matter from it (for instance, in the ontological argument, in the theory of continuous creation), nevertheless Descartes broke distinctly and completely with the method and spirit of the philosophy which had been handed down from antiquity through the vicissitudes of the Middle Ages and the struggles of the Renaissance. Even what he seems to borrow from it, he really transforms. Cartesianism not only has a positive meaning, which we shall presently study, but it has to begin with a critical function, and proposes first of all to do away with a philosophical system which, appealing to substantial forms and occult causes, claimed to explain everything and could demonstrate nothing.

There is accordingly something more in his attitude to his predecessors than a mere protest against the authoritative method, — a protest which had already been raised by eloquent voices in the sixteenth century and even earlier. We have in it, in

fact, a set determination to consider the generally accepted philosophy as null and void, and to replace it with another which shall owe nothing to the former. A bold undertaking, not merely of a reformative but of a revolutionary nature. In England, Bacon, while combating the Scholastic Philosophy in the matter of experimental method, nevertheless derived from it his conception of physical reality. Hobbes, however much he may have freed himself from traditional metaphysics, is nevertheless the heir of the later great English scholastics. In Germany likewise, the genius of Leibniz is one of conservatism as well as of innovation. He openly disapproves of Descartes's excessive severity toward scholasticism, of which, for his part, he preserves a great deal, in his doctrine as well as in his terminology. Therefore we see his successor Wolf restoring, so to speak, a new scholastic system, based on the philosophy of Leibniz. It was this philosophy that Kant imbibed; and later on, after Kant's *Kritik*, a kind of new scholasticism appeared (in the school of Hegel for instance), indisputably related to that of the Middle Ages. Thus, in Germany, the thread of philosophical tradition was never entirely broken.

In France, owing to Descartes, the case was altogether different. The Cartesian philosophy aimed at nothing less than the utter destruction of its rival. It prevailed; and, as early as the latter part of the seventeenth century, the victory was complete. This was both favorable and unfavorable to

the progress of French philosophy. Of course, it was no small advantage for the latter to free itself from the prestige of antiquity, from the tyranny of scholasticism, to regain its full independence, and to draw its inspiration freely from the spirit of the mathematical and physical sciences, the increasing power of which was a genuinely new element in the life of mankind. To this the success of Cartesianism, and the fact that its method persisted, even after the doctrine was discarded, bear sufficient testimony. But on the other hand, certain displeasing characteristics of French philosophy in the eighteenth century may, at least in some measure, have originated in this breaking with tradition. A taste for abstract and too simple solutions, a conviction that it is sufficient to argue soundly upon evident principles in order to discover the truth, even in the most complex problems of social life—in short, a lack of historical spirit, with which the French philosophy of that period has been reproached—all these faults are owing in some measure to the spirit of Cartesianism. Certain it is that Descartes and his followers, in their contest with tradition, failed to appreciate its value and necessary function.

Nothing is so significant in this respect as the way in which these writers speak of history. As it is not a science, it cannot possibly be the basis of a school. It may entertain us, but it cannot really teach us. It is even liable to beget false ideas, and to be an encouragement to extravagant undertak-

ings. And, logically speaking, whatever rests on historical claims only is insufficiently justified. This last maxim may, in practice, have most serious consequences. Descartes foresaw the attempt that would be made to extend its application to political and social problems. He therefore openly disclaims beforehand this application, which he personally refuses to make. Yet if he wishes us to abstain from criticising existing institutions, it is in his case, as in Montaigne's, for reasons of utility alone. One can easily imagine circumstances in which considerations of utility would favor the other side. It is, then, a mere question of expediency.

This tendency to claim that reason alone ought to be the basis of opinion, because reason alone can demonstrate it to be true, and the consequent tendency to make free use of rational criticism, appear in the history which Descartes gives us of his mind. Of all that he learned at school, nothing satisfied him except mathematics. Hardly had he freed himself from the sway of his masters (the best, he says, there were then in Europe), when he deliberately set about forgetting their teaching. He speaks only with irony of the various sciences, or so-called sciences: medicine, law, philosophy, as they were taught in his day. He coolly turns his back on belles lettres, and holds history in contempt. Geometry alone found favor in his eyes; still he wondered greatly at its being used only as an object of amusement for the curious, and that "on so firm a basis nothing more lofty had been established."

The ground was now cleared; Descartes could begin to build.

According to some, Descartes is first of all a man of science, and secondly a philosopher. According to others, the philosopher in him predominates over the man of science. In point of fact, philosophy and science were not separated in Descartes's view. He seeks to establish the system of truths accessible to man—a system which he conceived as unique, and which may be figured as an endless chain. And he seeks it in order to find the means of living as uprightly and happily as possible. Thus the end which Descartes has in view is a righteous and happy life: wherein he agrees with the philosophers of his time, and, we may also say, of all times.

In order to attain to this righteous and happy life, leaving out of account the teachings of religion, Descartes sees no sure way but the possession of truth or science. Now science, in its turn, rests on metaphysics, or primary philosophy, whence it derives its principles. Therefore Descartes proposes to be a metaphysician; but this he will be for the sake of science itself. Metaphysics is to him a road, but indeed a road of paramount importance, since all the rest depends upon the principles discovered therein. Besides, mathematics, physics, and other theoretical sciences are also roads, the terminal point lying in the applied sciences, to which they lead. "The whole of philosophy," says Descartes, in the Pref-

ace to the *Principes de la Philosophie*, "is like a tree, the roots of which are metaphysics; the trunk is the science of physics; and the branches shooting from that trunk are all the other sciences, which may be reduced to three main ones, viz., medicine, mechanics, and ethics, by which last I mean the highest and most perfect ethics, which, since it presupposes a complete knowledge of the other sciences, is the supreme degree of wisdom."

Thus if Descartes is careful to make a distinction between the sphere of action and that of knowledge, and if, before undertaking the long and difficult task of seeking after truth, he provides himself with a "provisional" ethics, which he unquestioningly accepts from authority and custom, he nevertheless proclaims the principles of action to be dependent upon knowledge. It is the business of reason not only to enlighten, but also to guide us. Descartes, believing in the future progress of mankind, considers it to be dependent on the development of the sciences. We even observe, in several passages, that the progress of ethics appears to him subordinate to that of mechanics and of medicine. But these in their turn depend for their advancement upon the establishment of a sound and rigorously demonstrated physical science. Thus, although science is not its own end, the fundamental problem of philosophy according to Descartes is finally reduced to the problem of the establishment of science.

Now there is no breach of continuity between metaphysics and physics; on the contrary, there is

a natural and necessary transition from the one to the other. Descartes attempted to build up a system by means of which one could proceed uninterruptedly from the first principles of cognition and of being, in a word, from God, down to the most specific scientific propositions of physiology or of ethics, without one link missing in the chain. A bold conception, which dominates the whole system and is inseparable from the famous method of Descartes.

Up to this point mathematics alone appeared to Descartes worthy of being called a science. It differs from everything else he had learned in the perfect lucidity of its principles, in the rigorous demonstration of its propositions, and in the inevitable sequence of its truths. But to what does it owe these characteristics, if not to the method from which mathematicians make it a rule never to depart? Therefore, in order to establish the science or philosophy sought by Descartes, it was sufficient to find a method that should be to philosophy what the method of mathematical deduction is to arithmetic, algebra and geometry.

To apply to that universal science conceived by Descartes the method so effectively employed in the above-mentioned sciences would evidently be the simplest solution of the problem proposed. But this solution is impracticable. The mathematical method, as we see it practiced in "the analysis of the ancients and the algebra of the moderns" is a special method, limited to the study of figures in geometry, and confined in algebra to symbols and

rules which hamper the mind. How could one pass from these processes, which are especially adapted to particular sciences, to the general method required by general science or philosophy? Descartes would undoubtedly never have conceived such an audacious hope, had not a great discovery of his set him on this track. He had invented analytical geometry, or the method of expressing by means of equations the properties of geometrical figures, or, inversely, of representing determinate equations by means of geometrical figures. In this way, Descartes substituted for the old methods, which were especially adapted to algebra and geometry as distinct branches, a general method, applicable to what he called the "universal mathematical science," viz., to the study of "the various ratios or proportions to be found between the objects of the mathematical sciences, hitherto regarded as distinct." Not only did this discovery mark a decisive epoch in the history of mathematics, which it provided with an instrument of incomparable simplicity and power, but it furthermore gave Descartes a right to hope for the philosophical method he was seeking. Ought not a last generalization to be possible, by means of which the method he had so happily discovered should become applicable, not only to the "universal mathematical science," but also to the systematic combination of all the truths which our finite minds may permit us to attain?

Thus was formed in Descartes's mind the method which he summed up in the *Discours de la Méthode*,

and which was destined in his plan to replace the useless and sterile ancient logic. It is inexpedient here to explain these rules minutely. We must, however, observe that the first one, "Never to accept a thing as true which I do not clearly know to be such," is not, properly speaking, a precept of method. Such precepts are set forth in a subsequent set of rules, where Descartes successively prescribes analysis for dividing difficulties into parts, and synthesis for constructing and expounding science. But the first rule is quite different. It does not lay down a process to be used in order to discover truth. It concerns method only in so far as method is not separated from science itself (and such indeed was Descartes's meaning). If such is the case, the first step of method—or of science—must be to determine accurately by what mark we can recognize what is to be regarded as true, and what is to be set aside as being only probable or dubious. This mark is what we call evidence. This first rule may have been suggested to Descartes, as the others were, by mathematics. Even as in his method he generalized the processes used for mathematical researches and demonstrations, so in this formula he laid down the regulating principle to which this science owes its perfection, and which was also to become the regulating principle of the new philosophy.

Thus the famous rule of "evidence" reaches far beyond the scope of a mere principle of method. Both from what it excludes and what it implies, it may be looked upon as the motto of the Carte-

sian philosophy. It rejects, to begin with, any knowledge grounded upon authority alone (excepting the truths of religion). Even though Aristotle and all his commentators were agreed on one opinion, this would be no proof of its being true; and should it really chance to be so, the authority of Aristotle would count for nothing towards establishing its standing in science. Nothing can be admitted in science but what is evident; i. e., nothing but what is so clear and plain as to leave no possible doubt, or is soundly deduced from principles which rest on such evidence. The whole system of scholasticism: metaphysics, logic, physics, thus stands irretrievably condemned *in toto*. The so-called moral sciences, which cannot attain to a degree of evidence comparable to that of mathematics, and which have to content themselves with more or less strong probability, are likewise rejected by the Cartesian formula; in fact, Descartes, as has already been observed, had but little esteem for history and erudition.

But what makes this rule of paramount importance is, that it establishes reason as supreme judge of what is false or true. Reason thus proclaims its own sovereign right to decide without appeal. What we are to think, to believe, and to do should be determined solely by evidence; and of that evidence reason alone is judge (except in the case of urgency compelling us to immediate action). It is true, reason being identical in all men, that such truth as becomes evident to one of them becomes

so to all other men likewise. Therefore the assent given to evidence by one mind is by implication equivalent to the universal consent of mankind; so that the individual reason which distinguishes between true and false is precisely the universal feature in every man.

Nevertheless, Descartes felt the danger that lay in his formula. He foresaw the very serious misunderstandings to which it might give rise, and he endeavored to prevent these by taking multifarious precautions. First of all, the truths of religion are carefully set apart and withdrawn from the criticism of reason. They do not fall under its jurisdiction. It is not ours to examine them, but to believe them. According to Descartes, we must seek neither to adapt them to our reason, nor to adapt our reason to them. They belong to another domain. Then Descartes makes a distinction between the sphere of knowledge and that of conduct; he submits to provisional ethics, which is to be replaced by definitive ethics only when science is completed, that is to say, in a still remote future. Moreover, even in the province of speculative thought Descartes refrains from touching upon political and social questions. He censures "those blundering and restless humours" ever ready to propose unasked-for reforms. Thus, after moral and religious problems, political problems in their turn are cautiously set aside. Where, then, shall the absolute sovereignty of reason be exercised? In philosophy, in abstract sciences, in physics; in short, wherever

men generally have no other interest but that of pure truth.

Well-meant precautions these were, no doubt, but vain precautions, too. Let reason rule supreme over this apparently limited province, and by degrees it will invade the others. If we allow it, as a principle, the right to decide without appeal between falsehood and truth, it soon will admit of no restrictions but those it sets of its own accord through the works of a Kant or of an Auguste Comte. In fact, French philosophy in the eighteenth century was in the main an endeavor to apply the spirit of the Cartesian method to the very objects: politics, ethics, religion, which Descartes had carefully set apart. By holding nothing as true until I have evidence of its being so, do I not in advance deprive all historical rights of the means of securing recognition; do I not thereby summon all privileges, institutions, beliefs, and fortunes to produce their title deeds before the bar of reason? By solemnly paying homage to Descartes, the "Assemblée Constituante" proved that the spirit of the Revolution was conscious of one of its chief sources.

Being now in possession of his method, did not Descartes have all that was necessary to construct his philosophic system with absolute mathematical certainty? No, for in mathematics the foundation principles: axioms and definitions, are so plain and evident that no reasonable mind will question them. But philosophy had until his time been wanting in

such principles, and the object which Descartes has in view is precisely to establish them.

To attain this end, he first casts aside as false (at least provisionally) all the opinions which he has hitherto held as true, and which are only probable. In order to avoid tedious enumerations, he proposes to consider opinions from the point of view of their sources. "For instance," says he, "having sometimes found my senses deceitful, I will distrust all that they teach me. As I have sometimes erred with regard to very simple reasoning, I will distrust the results of even the most positive sciences. Lastly, I may suppose that an evil genius, who is all-powerful, takes delight in making me err, even when I believe I see the truth most plainly. Therefore, by a voluntary effort, which is always possible since I am free, I will suspend my judgment even in cases where the evidence seems to me irresistible.

"Is there any proposition which is not affected by this "hyperbolical" doubt? There is one, and one only. Let my senses deceive me, let my reasonings be false, let an evil genius delude me concerning things which appear to me most certain; if I am mistaken, it is because I am,—and this truth "I think, therefore I am," *cogito, ergo sum,* is so self-evident and so certain that the most extravagant doubt of skeptics is unable to shake it." Here then is the first principle of philosophy sought for by Descartes. And even as Archimedes asked only a standing-place to lift the world, so Descartes, having found a *quid inconcussum*, an indisputable

proposition, set to work to erect his whole system upon this foundation.

However, if according to the custom of philosophers we distinguish the sphere of knowledge from that of existence, this proposition, or, as it is called, Descartes's *cogito*, is certainly first in the sphere of knowledge; for I may have doubts about whatever I may think, but about my thinking I can have no doubt, even in the very moment when I doubt. But in the sphere of existence the Absolute, that is, God, comes first. Therefore Descartes, as soon as he had established the *cogito*, turned to demonstrating the existence of God. He knows that he thinks, but he also knows that he doubts, and therefore that he is imperfect; for not knowing instead of knowing is an imperfection. He therefore has an idea of perfection. Whence comes this idea? Descartes examines all the conjectures which may be made as to its origin; he eliminates them one after another as inadequate until one only remains, viz., that the idea of perfection cannot have sprung from experience, that we could not have it if the all-perfect Being, that is, God, did not actually exist, and that therefore this idea is as "the stamp left by the workman upon his work."

Descartes was bound to demonstrate the existence of God at the very outset. Otherwise, the supposition of an evil genius, who was able to deceive him even when he conceived things with perfect clearness, would have cast suspicion upon all propositions but the *cogito;* the doubt which he himself

had raised would have paralyzed him. In order to do away with such a supposition, Descartes at once proceeds to demonstrate the existence of an all-perfect God, who cannot possibly wish to deceive us. But is not this a syllogistic circle? If the plainest argument, in order to be accepted as valid, needs the guaranty of God, what will guarantee the argument intended to prove the existence of God?

A syllogistic circle indeed, had not Descartes escaped from it with the help of the following reasons: God's guaranty is necessary, not for the sake of the evidence, which is quite sufficient in itself so long as it lasts (whereof the *cogito* is a proof); but in order to assure me of the truth of propositions which I remember having admitted as evident without remembering for what reasons. It is necessary, in short, wherever memory intervenes, but only in that case. Now if we have no need of memory to know that we think, neither do we need it to know that God exists. In spite of the syllogistic form which Descartes gave to the proof of the existence of God, this proof is rather intuitive than grounded on formal reasoning. In the act of conceiving the idea of the All-perfect Being, I *see* at the same time the impossibility of His not existing. The existence of all other things is looked upon as only possible; but the existence of God appears as evidently necessary, being comprised in the very notion of God. This is no argument, but rather an immediate apprehension. It is, as Malebranche said shortly afterwards, a proof

"from mere vision." The syllogistic circle therefore was only apparent. Descartes was right in establishing the existence of God immediately after the *cogito*. Henceforward he could in all confidence make use of the faculties given him by God, who never deceives. He only needed now to follow out his method carefully, and to link propositions together in the requisite order, in order to arrive infallibly at the truth.

Now, the requisite order is, to begin with things which are most general, simple, and easy to grasp; that is, with the primary principles from which the other truths are to be deduced. Physics therefore is not to be studied until metaphysics is well grounded. Acting upon this precept, Descartes first established the existence of an absolute and perfect Being, that is, God; for the same reason he now proceeds to ascertain the essence of the soul and of the body. To reach this end, his starting point is again the *cogito*.

I think, I am; but what am I? A creature that thinks; that is to say, judges, remembers, feels, imagines, and wills; a being whose existence is not linked to any place, nor dependent upon any material thing. Descartes has just got out of his universal doubt by means of the *cogito*. The only thing the existence of which he can maintain at this point is his own thought. Now, the existence of his thought does not appear to him to be necessarily linked to that of his body and dependent upon the latter. On the contrary, he may sup-

pose that his body does not exist, and that the perception of the external world and of his own members is an illusion. He is even unable for the present to reject this supposition; he cannot do so till later on, and even then with some difficulty. Nevertheless, since he thinks, he is certain he exists. But, conversely, let him for a moment suppose that he ceases to think; upon this supposition he ceases to exist, although all external bodies and his own body should remain real. Therefore, the cognition of his own being, which is his thought, by no means depends on material things, the existence of which is still problematic. Therefore his whole nature is to think.

"You suppose," some opponent said to Descartes, "that your own body does not exist, and you say that nevertheless you continue to think. But should your supposition prove true, that is to say, should your body and your brain be dissolved, can you affirm that *even then* you would continue to think?" To which Descartes answered: "I do not assert this,—at least not now. My present object is not to demonstrate the immortality of the soul. This is a metaphysical question I am not now able to solve,—for I know only one fact as yet, viz., that I think (and also that God exists). The whole question I am examining is merely: 'What am I?' Now it appears from what has been said, that my existence is known to me as that of a being endowed with thought and endowed only with thought; for, whilst I am as

certain as possible of the existence of my thought, the existence of anything else is still wholly doubtful to me. The existence of this thought may possibly be actually connected with that of the brain. I know nothing about that. I am not discussing that for the present. One thing is certain: I know myself as a thought, and I positively do not know myself as a brain."

This is one of the leading features of the philosophy of Descartes, and one which may enable us to measure his influence, by comparing what had been thought before him with what was thought after him. The *cogito* of Descartes displaced, so to speak, the axis of philosophy. To the ancients and to the scholastics (theology excepted), the thinking mind appeared inseparable from the universe, regarded as the object of its thought, just as the soul itself was conceived to be the "substantial form" of the living body. According to Descartes, on the contrary, the existence of the thinking mind, far from being dependent on any other existing thing, is the essential condition of every other existence conceivable to us: for if I am certain of the existence of anything but myself, with far better reason am I certain that I, who have that thought, am in existence. The only reality I cannot possibly question is that of my own thought.

Both the adversaries and the successors of Descartes started from this point. All the modern forms of idealism, so utterly different from the idealism of the ancients, have a common origin in

the *cogito*. The tempered and prudent idealism of Locke, the Christian idealism of Malebranche, the skeptical idealism of Hume, the transcendental idealism of Kant, the absolute idealism of Fichte, and many other doctrines derived from these, which have appeared in our century, are all more or less closely related to the foundation principle of the Cartesian philosophy. Moreover, the conception of nature in modern science must also be connected with it. For, as we shall see farther on, when Descartes set thought, that is, the soul, so distinctly apart from everything extraneous to itself, in so doing he made necessary a new conception of force and life in the material world.

Now, let us add to the Cartesian formula, "I am a thing which thinks," the following principle, "All that I conceive clearly and distinctly is true." Then, since I conceive clearly and distinctly that the nature of the body and that of the soul have no attributes in common, therefore it is true that these two natures or substances are separated one from the other. Not only is there no need of my having any notion of the body in order to comprehend the soul, but also the soul has no need of the body in order to exist.

Descartes, therefore, had a right to infer that "the soul is more easily known than the body." This does not mean that, according to his doctrine, psychology is an easier science than physics or physiology. Psychology as we conceive it has no place in the system of Descartes; there is at most

a mere sketch of it in the *Passions de l'Âme*. But this maxim is metaphysical, not psychological. It means that there is no more evident knowledge than that which the soul has of itself, since there is none which it is more impossible to doubt; that the body, on the contrary, is known only representatively, and that, far from our being unable to doubt its existence, we cannot overcome such a doubt, when once raised, save by means of laborious and complicated reasonings.

In order to make all this clearer still, let us remember Descartes's oft-repeated caution to "cast off all the impressions of the senses and imagination, and trust to reason alone." There are not two kinds of evidence: one which tells us that the sun shines, that honey is sweet, that lead is heavy; and another which informs us that if equals be added to equals, the sums are equal. Only the latter proposition is self-evident; the former statements, in spite of any prepossession to the contrary, are not so. The impressions of the senses are vivid, but confused; we cannot account for them, and nothing can warrant them to be true. The water which is warm to me seems cold to you. Cold and heat, as well as all other qualities pertaining to bodies, with the exception of extension, are not inherent in them; they are relative to the sentient subject. Therefore, if we think we know bodies by what our senses teach us of them, we fall into error, as will happen every time when, through overhastiness or prejudice, we form a judgment

before the evidence is complete. For can I not have in a dream all the perceptions I now have, and be as firmly persuaded of their reality? But whether I am dreaming or waking, it is true that two and two are four, and it is true that I, who think so, am in existence.

Thus, previous to philosophical reflection, nothing seems to us so well known as the body and its qualities, because we form images of them continually and without any difficulty; whereas it is not easy for us to realize what the soul is, seeing that it is not an object for the imagination to grasp. The first task of the philosopher consists precisely in disengaging himself from the false light of the senses and seeking the true light of reason. It is an effort akin to the one demanded by Plato, when he termed philosophy the science of the invisible, and recommended the study of mathematics as a preparatory training. The body and the organs of the senses, far from making us acquainted with what really is, are a hindrance to the proper activity of the mind. Even matter, which we fancy our hands, eyes, ears, etc., can apprehend immediately, we really know only by means of our understanding. For the latter alone can give us a distinct notion of it, viz., the notion of a thing measurable in length, breadth, and depth.

The other qualities of bodies are not really inherent in them. "Look at this piece of wax; it has just been taken from the hive; it has not yet lost the sweetness of the honey it contained; it still re-

tains something of the fragrance of the flowers from which it was gathered; its color, figure, and size are apparent; it is hard, cold, easily handled, and if you strike it, will give forth some sound. * * * But now, while I am speaking, somebody brings it near the fire; whatever taste remained in it is exhaled, the odor evaporates, its color changes, its shape is lost, its size increases, it becomes liquid, it is warmer, one can hardly handle it, and when we strike it, it will no longer give forth a sound." And yet the same wax is there. Therefore this wax was neither the honey-sweet flavor, nor the pleasant flowery smell, nor the whiteness, nor the form, nor the sound, but merely a body which, a short time before, was apparent to my senses under these forms, but now presents itself under other forms. Therefore all I can *conceive* clearly and distinctly about this body is its extension.

Descartes's definition of the soul is "a thing that thinks"; of the body, "a thing that has extension." This doctrine is strangely at variance with the metaphysics taught in his time. The scholastic philosophers, who on this point followed the teaching of Aristotle, regarded the soul as both the principle of life and the principle of thought. The same soul which in plants is purely nutritive, becomes locomotive, then sensitive in animals, and lastly, in man, rational. And though such a doctrine made the immortality of the soul a difficult thing to conceive, it was no cause of embarrassment

to the schoolmen, for immortality to them was an object of faith, not of demonstration. There is neither a nutritive nor a locomotive soul, says Descartes. There is but one kind of soul, which is the thinking soul, for feeling is thinking. Nutrition and locomotion are explainable simply by the laws of mechanics. Animals, which do not think, do not feel either. They may be looked upon as automatons, and the perfection of some of their actions may be compared to the perfection of the workings of a clock. After this, we can no longer suppose that the destiny of man after death is the same as that of flies and ants.

Scholastic physics likewise assumed the existence of forces and occult causes inherent in matter, and thought the specific nature of certain natural phenomena could not otherwise be accounted for. Here again Descartes adopts the reverse of their doctrine, rejecting *in toto* these assumed principles, forces, and causes, which to him are but confused notions, hypotheses convenient to sluggish minds, explanations which explain nothing, but merely repeat the enunciation of the problem under another form. Given matter, that is, extension as considered by geometricians, he wants no other data than number, motion, and duration. These are sufficient, he considers, to account for all the phenomena which take place in bodies either inorganic or living.

Thus Descartes's physical science is purely rational in character and in scrupulous accordance with the rule of his method which forbids him to

"accept anything as true unless it appears by evidence to be so." It tends to assume a geometrical form, and all questions of physics are reduced, at least in principle, to problems of mechanics. "Give me matter and the laws of motion," says Descartes, "and I will build a universe exactly like the one that we behold, with skies, stars, sun, and earth, and on the earth minerals, plants, and animals; in short, everything that experience introduces to us, except the rational soul of man."

No doubt Descartes imagined all natural phenomena, and in particular those of animated beings, to be less complicated than they really are. His conceptions are those of a great mathematician, living at a time when physics and chemistry hardly existed, and when biology did not exist at all. He thinks he can determine *a priori* the number of the fixed stars. He imagines he can describe accurately the formation of the fœtus. He hopes, by taking due care of the human machine and by repairing it when necessary, to protract the life of man indefinitely, to conquer disease and even death. Scientific men in our days are better acquainted with the difficulties of such problems, and are consequently less pretentious. But the scientific ideal they aim at, though indefinitely removed from that which we are considering, has remained pretty much the same as Descartes conceived it: to discover the laws of every phenomenon by reducing them, as far as possible, to number and measure, and to discard

every metaphysical hypothesis meant to explain any class of physical phenomena.

This geometrical conception of the material universe was repeatedly attacked by the successors of Descartes. Leibniz endeavoured to prove that the Cartesian definition of matter was incompatible with the laws of motion. Leibniz is fond of connecting Democritus and Descartes, and is wont to quote them together. The parallel is an ingenious one, but should not be followed up too closely. No doubt Descartes, like Democritus, requires only matter and motion in order to explain the genesis of the physical universe. But, to say nothing of the very considerable differences between the explanation of Democritus and that of Descartes, can any one forget that the physical science of Democritus and his metaphysics are all one and the same thing? Atoms and vacuum are to him the primal elements of all things, and, as was objected to him by Aristotle, he does not take the trouble even to explain the origin of motion. With Descartes, before physics is begun a complete metaphysical system has first been established, and it is from this that physics is to derive its principles: the primordial laws of phenomena (for instance, that light propagates itself in straight lines) are deduced from God's attributes. Moreover, Descartes is not compelled by his system, as Democritus is, to deny the existence of final causes. On the contrary, he maintains their existence. It is true that he for-

bids us to seek them out, but the reason is that, according to him, it would be highly presumptuous in us mortals to try to comprehend God's designs; the more so as God's liberty is absolute and infinite, and since, in consequence, His acts may be wholly unintelligible to our reason. And lastly, far from looking upon matter as self-existent, Descartes believes that bodies, as well as all other finite things, exist only by God's express will and constant help. Should this help cease for an instant, all bodies would at once sink back into nothingness.

The mechanical character of Descartes's system, if mechanical it be, is therefore far removed from the materialism of Democritus. Descartes firmly maintained the reality of free-will, to which he ascribes an essential part in his theory of judgment and of error. It is only as physicist, not as philosopher, that Descartes may be termed mechanical. But in this sense, nearly all men of science are so, too; for, to use F. A. Lange's striking expression: "Mechanism is an excellent formula for the science of nature."

But is not, however, the strictly deductive science conceived by Descartes very remote from the modern science of nature, which employs the experimental method with so much zeal and success? True, Descartes often thought deduction easy when it was difficult, and possible when it was impracticable. But this was a question of fact, not of principle. As this or that branch of science (at least, of physical science) is gradually brought

nearer to perfection, we see it grow from the experimental into the rational. Such has long been the case with astronomy and celestial mechanics, and later, successively, with optics, with acoustics, with hydrodynamics, with the theory of heat and electricity and other fields of physics, all so many confirmations of the Cartesian ideal.

Moreover, Descartes himself assigned an important rôle to the experimental method. Anecdotes depict him to us as rising very early, in Amsterdam, in order to choose in a butcher's shop the joints he wished "to anatomize at leisure"; or answering an inquirer who wished to see his library, "Here it is," at the same time pointing to a quarter of veal which he was busy dissecting. In the last years of his life he devoted only a few hours a year to mathematics, and not much more to metaphysics. He busied himself almost exclusively with experiments in physics and physiology. How could he have failed to appreciate the importance of a method which he was himself so assiduously putting into practice?

"Anticipating causes with effects," is Descartes's felicitous definition of experimenting. It clearly shows the functions he ascribed to it. Were there only one way in which a certain effect might be deduced from given causes, experimenting would be unnecessary. But natural phenomena are so complex, and the possible combinations of causes are so numerous, that we may nearly always explain in several ways the production of a given effect.

Which is the right way? Experiment alone can decide. Let us make a distinction between science already developed and science which is developing. To expound a developed science the suitable method is deduction,—descent from causes to effects. But science which is developing cannot yet adopt this method; and to discover unknown laws, it must employ the experimental method, must anticipate causes with effects.

Descartes had written a *Traité du Monde* and was about to publish it, when the condemnation of Galileo for heresies concerning the motion of the earth altered his resolution. Being above all desirous to work in peace, and to postpone as long as he could a perhaps inevitable conflict with the theologians, he published only a few fragments of his physical theories, and put a summary sketch of it into the admirable fifth part of the *Discours de la Méthode*. We must certainly deplore the loss of this great work, which would throw light upon many an obscure point in the Cartesian philosophy. But after all, the essential part of the doctrine did not lie here, any more than in the well-known hypothesis of "vortices," which the Cartesian philosophers of the eighteenth century vainly tried to set up in opposition to the principle of universal gravitation discovered by Newton, and with which some physicists now partly agree in their theories of matter.

The main interest lies elsewhere, viz., in the per-

fect character of the science of nature, of which Descartes had such a clear and precise notion, even though he was far from being able to put it into practice save in a few points (for instance, by his discoveries in optics). It is said that the man who invented the plough still walks, invisible, beside the peasant who drives his own plough in our days. I might almost say that, in our laboratories, Descartes stands invisible and present, investigating with our scientific men the laws of phenomena.

If he had lived, would he have passed on from the sciences of life to the ethical and social sciences, as he had done already from mathematics to physics, and from physics to anatomy and physiology? This may be doubted. To say nothing of considerations of prudence, to which Descartes was most susceptible, he held in slight esteem the visionaries and political reformers of the sixteenth century, and would have been sorely vexed if any comparison had been drawn between their fancies and his own doctrines. On the other hand, he could not but find it extremely difficult to make social facts fall in with his method, since, as Auguste Comte very aptly observed, so long as biology is not sufficiently advanced, social science must needs be out of the question. Now, in the time of Descartes, biology was still unborn. Even ethics he does not seem to have taken into deep consideration. He borrows the rules of his provisional ethics from Montaigne and from the Stoics. Stoicism, modified in some respects, also forms the fundamental part of Des-

cartes's moral letters to Princess Elizabeth. It is a peculiarity of French philosophy, that it has produced many moralists and few moral theorists. The reason for this we shall seek elsewhere. Certain it is that Descartes was not one of these theorists. Perhaps he believed that scientific ethics (ethics not grounded on religious authority) could not be established till the science of man was established, and the connection of the physical and the moral better known. To this knowledge he opened the way in his *Traité des Passions de l'Âme*.

All the precautions taken by Descartes, all his prudence, did not shield him from the attacks his philosophy was to bring upon him, as being "subtle, enticing, and bold." After hesitating a long while, the Jesuits, by whom he had been brought up at La Flèche, and among whom he had still some friends, declared themselves against his philosophy. The seventh series of *Objections*, by Father Bourdin, express the opinion of this society. Descartes wrote a vigorous reply. His quarrel with the Jesuits was one of his motives for not living in France. He established himself in Holland, where he lived a long while in undisturbed peace. But as his philosophy spread, attention was drawn to him, and as the universities of the country were beginning to quarrel about his theories, he felt that his life there would soon become unbearable. He therefore resolved to yield to the entreaties of Queen Christina, who earnestly urged him to come to Sweden. But he could not endure the severe clim-

ate of that country, and hardly six months had elapsed when he died of inflammation of the lungs. Later, his body was brought back to France.

The philosophy of Descartes was in accord with the leading tendencies of his time. The success which attended it from the moment it appeared is a proof of its opportuneness, and it is difficult to determine whether it formed rather than expressed the spirit of the age. Doubtless it did both. As has been said, the seventeenth century in France was preëminently the "age of reason."

> Aimez donc la raison; que toujours vos écrits
> Empruntent d'elle seule et leur lustre et leur prix,

said Boileau; yet perhaps, had it not been for the Cartesian philosophy, this taste for reason might not have asserted itself so earnestly and have been so perfectly conscious of its existence.

This philosophy of "clear ideas" prevailed in France in the second half of the seventeenth century, and from France its influence spread over all Europe. Though vigorously attacked in the eighteenth century, both as to its metaphysics and its physics, it nevertheless remained discernible even in the methods of its adversaries. Locke, Hume, and Condillac had not the same conception of evidence as Descartes; but their empiricism was as fond of clearness as his rationalism had been. Newton combated the hypothesis of "vortices," but he preserved the Cartesian notion of a mechanical explanation of physical phenomena. For a thorough-

going and express negation of the Cartesian spirit we must go to the end of the eighteenth century. Then the German romantic writers spring up, and maintain that the philosophy of clear ideas is false from its very principle. According to them, reality is not clear, and the more satisfactory a doctrine is to the human understanding, the surer it is to reproduce only the surface of things, while the essence of them is mysterious, intangible and inexpressible. Whence it follows that religions, arts, and literatures are spontaneous philosophies, incomparably deeper than the systems produced by the conscious labor of the understanding, even as the works of nature are artistically superior to the articles manufactured by man.

The philosophy of Descartes, to tell the truth, affords but little scope to sentiment, and still less to the imagination and to the hidden and unconscious activities of the mind. It places value on evidence alone, whose vivid, but glaring light, dispels the *chiaroscuro* so dear to romantic writers. This fixed and rigid purpose has its drawbacks, which were not long in making their appearance among the followers of Descartes.

But apart from the fact that in Descartes himself the rational effort was uncommonly sincere and vigorous, at the time when this philosophy appeared it was really necessary. It was a deliverer. It put an end to superannuated doctrines, the domination of which was still heavily felt. It cleared the ground, and set physics free, once for all, from

the clogs of metaphysical hypotheses. Lastly it formulated problems which needed formulation. Descartes wished to furnish science not only with a powerful and flexible instrument such as Bacon had already sought, but also with an unchanging and immovable basis. Thence sprang the "provisional doubt," with which his method bids him begin, which obliges him to test all previously acquired information, and which may be looked upon as the starting-point of all modern theories of knowledge. For this doubt, which affects successively perception, imagination, reasoning power, and stops only before the immediate self-intuition of thought, is itself a criticism of the faculty of knowledge. It studies it in its connection both with the outward object and with the very mind which is thinking; in short, it heralds Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason.*

An innovating and fruitful doctrine nearly always develops in various directions. The various minds that receive it gradually draw from it diverse and sometimes contradictory conclusions, most of which were overlooked and would often have been disapproved of by the founder of the system. This is perhaps even truer of Descartes than of any other philosopher. Being chiefly preoccupied with the method and structure of science, he did not hesitate to leave open, at least temporarily, many important questions which his method did not require him to solve immediately. Thus it happened that metaphysical systems very different from one another were soon founded on the Car-

tesian principles. Spinoza adopted the definition which Descartes had given of soul and matter, but in thought and extension he saw only two attributes of one and the same substance. Beside this pantheism, appeared the idealism of Malebranche, which proceeds no less directly from Descartes; for did not the latter say that "truth is the same thing as being?" And does not the theory of continued creation lead directly to that of occasional causes? Locke, who combated Descartes on the subject of innate ideas, without understanding him exactly, has on the other hand many points in common with him; the very idea of inventorying and examining the ideas in our minds is singularly akin to the critical examination of our knowledge which, in Descartes, precedes the *cogito*. And lastly, into the idealism of Leibniz the Cartesian element enters in large measure; for instance, the notion of sensation being but a dim intellection, which is the central point of Leibniz's theory of knowledge, had already been clearly stated by Descartes.

The philosophy of Descartes is therefore a sort of cross-road whence diverge the chief ways followed by modern thought. Still, outside of France, his method has not been followed without restrictions, and his philosophy has been accepted only to be immediately combined with other elements, either traditional or modern. In France, the influence has been far deeper and more enduring. There, while the Cartesian philosophy may have lost its

prestige rather quickly, the Cartesian spirit, owing doutless to its close affinity with the very genius of the nation, has never disappeared, and we shall recognize its influence, not only throughout the whole eighteenth century and in the French Revolution, but in all the greatest thinkers of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER II.

CARTESIANISM IN FRANCE, MALEBRANCHE.

UPON the appearance of the *Discours de la Méthode* the majority of the French public declared themselves forthwith in favor of Descartes. Descartes had published the work in French, "the language of his country," in preference to Latin, "that of his teachers," and had thus appealed beforehand to all those "who make use of their reason." The event proved him to have reckoned rightly. Never was a new doctrine more favorably received. How surprising and delightful to see a bold and living philosophy, the chief concern of which was to "guide reason well and to seek the truth in science," suddenly springing up to confront an antiquated and decaying tradition which had no life nor use outside the walls of the schools! No less pleasing was it for the clearness and simplicity of its principles, which formed such a happy contrast to the obscurity, distinctions, and endless subtleties of scholasticism. Many women were ardent Cartesians. The *Femmes Savantes* in Molière speak, as a matter of course, of thinking substance and subtile matter, and Madame de Sévigné was on the point of becoming a Cartesian in order to show her sympathy with Madame de Grignan, her daughter,

who was very partial to Descartes, and called him "her father."

In spite of the rapid and brilliant success of this philosophy, and of the enthusiastic admiration bestowed upon its author—

> Descartes, ce mortel dont on eût fait un dieu
> Chez les paiens† * * *

still it encountered a fierce and tenacious opposition, which, no doubt from the first, foresaw its own defeat, but did not confess itself vanquished till the end of the seventeenth century. This opposition sprang chiefly from the universities in which the traditional scholastic doctrine was taught. In some of these, into which the philosophy of Descartes speedily made its way, it was immediately combated and condemned. In Paris only Boileau's *Arrêt burlesque* saved the Parliament from the ridiculous step of an actual fiat forbidding the teaching of any other philosophy than that of Aristotle. In Rome the Jesuits succeeded in having the works of Descartes inserted in the *Index Expurgatorius*. They had hesitated a long while, and the rupture might have been avoided had the matter not been complicated with ecclesiastical contentions. It was sufficient that the Oratorians and the Jansenists had openly declared themselves in favor of Descartes, to cause the Jesuits to oppose him. It was for them an opportunity of humiliating the congregation of the Oratory and one more means of persecuting the Jansenists. Thus the philosophy

†"Descartes, this mortal who would have been a god among the pagans."

of Descartes served as a pretext for most unphilosophical quarrels.

In opposition to Descartes the Jesuits placed Gassendi, the keenest and deepest of his critics. Not that Gassendi's philosophy had no points in common with that of Descartes. Like the latter, and before him, Gassendi had proclaimed the rights of free philosophy, and attacked scholasticism with unusual violence; like him also he was a mathematician and a physicist as well as a philosopher, and in full accord with the men of science of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth. To this his scientific biographies and his correspondence with Galileo bear testimony. But, unlike Descartes, he did not undertake to substitute for scholasticism a system of his own. Being well versed in the history of ancient systems, he applied himself chiefly to reviving that of Epicurus. He endeavored to restore the real physiognomy of the latter philosopher, disfigured as it had been by legendary tradition, and his real doctrine, no less distorted than his character. He took up again, on his own account, the chief features of the Epicurean logic and physics. Yet while he was a sensationalist, and gave, like Epicurus, a materialistic explanation of acquired knowledge, Gassendi nevertheless maintained that there is an immortal soul within us, and that there is a God whose Providence created and rules the world. This eclecticism, the sincerity of which does not seem doubtful, served to prevent Gassendi from being a very formidable adversary of

Cartesianism. As a reviver of atomism, and the defender of a physical conception which was soon after to be adopted by such men as Boyle and Newton, Gassendi left a lasting impress on the history of philosophy. But the empiricism which he opposed to the rationalism of Descartes was not consistent enough to stop the progress of the latter for any length of time.

Descartes had always lived as a good Roman Catholic; and before laying down his doctrine he had carefully "set apart" all truths pertaining to religious faith. This certainly was an evidence of his respect and submissiveness; and yet such a precaution did not satisfy every one. Religious truths are not so easily "set apart." For instance, how does Descartes make his theory, according to which matter is nothing else than extension, agree with the mystery of transubstantiation? It seems, indeed, that it should always be possible to accord with a mystery, so long at least as one does not formally deny it. In fact Descartes tried to show that his doctrine asserted nothing incompatible with the mystery; but his explanations were not thought orthodox, and they marred rather than mended matters. Bossuet preferred to disregard them, so as not to be bound to censure Descartes, and thought himself justified in so doing, as Descartes had not published these explanations over his own name.

Be the truth what it may on this point, the Cartesian rationalism, which boldly freed itself from all

authority, even from religious authority, was calculated to alarm pious consciences, and actually elicited from them hostile judgments. Some looked upon Descartes as a useful ally of religion. They rejoiced to see him combat the libertine with his own weapons, and demonstrate, with the help of reason alone, the existence of God and the difference between body and soul. Others were not so much impressed with the service rendered to religion as they were made uneasy by seeing reason and faith thus deliberately separated, fearing lest the side of faith should finally find itself in the minority. Besides, were libertines so sure to be silenced by Descartes's demonstrations, and might not his principles very possibly be turned to good account by unbelievers? Pascal, while admiring the genius of Descartes, really seems to have pointed out the danger in which the Christian dogma would be involved by the results of such a philosophy.

It was necessary therefore to allay this solicitude. It was not sufficient that the philosophy of Descartes did not deny the truths of religion; it must needs show that the consequences of its principles were in strict accordance with what Christian faith demanded that its followers should believe. Scholasticism had endeavored to effect such a reconciliation, and had found its strength in having, at least for a time, achieved it. The same problem confronted the Cartesian philosophy, and attempts at solution were not long wanting. The craving for unity is an imperious one; many minds are not

contented with two classes of truths in juxtaposition, even if no contradiction be perceptible between them; the two classes must, to satisfy them, be reduced to one.

The task here was made particularly difficult by the characteristics of both the theology and the philosophy which had to be reconciled. Protestant theology has in the end always acquiesced, more or less readily, in such philosophical doctrines as were not positively irreligious; this it is justified in doing, since it acknowledges itself to be a product of evolution, and holds that change is no sign of error. But the Roman Catholic theology, on the contrary, makes immutability the necessary condition of truth. Not only the dogma, but the very interpretation of the dogma is fixed, and not even the slightest modification of what has been established by infallible and divine authority must be exacted to secure agreement with a philosophical doctrine. The Cartesian system, on the other hand, is positive and clear cut, and hardly lends itself to compromises, which its methods forbid by strictly excluding from the realm of science whatever cannot maintain itself before the court of reason. Moreover, to effect the desired reconciliation, and make Cartesianism a doctrine not only respectful to but expressive of faith, required a mind at once extraordinarily metaphysical and extraordinarily pious; an imagination wonderfully quick and penetrating and able to recognize in the Cartesian precepts and tenets the religious convic-

tions with which it was itself imbued. Such a soul was Malebranche.

Malebranche was a philosopher, to use Plato's beautiful expression, with his whole soul. Far from raising a kind of impenetrable partition between his religious faith and his rational thought, he did not even conceive the possibility of a conflict between faith and philosophy, if the latter were genuine. "I am persuaded, Ariste, that one has need to be a sound philosopher in order to find one's way into the understanding of the truths of faith, and that the better fortified one is in the true principles of metaphysics, the more steadfastly will he cling to the truths of religion." These few words sum up the program which Malebranche endeavored to carry out, or more exactly, the *postulatum*, the truth of which his whole philosophy seeks to establish.

To this end it was necessary for him to introduce between Catholic dogma and Cartesian rationalism new elements which would enable him to pass by imperceptible degrees from the one to the other. These elements offered themselves to him almost spontaneously in Augustine, whose doctrine was particularly studied by the congregation of the Oratory, to which Malebranche belonged. With the help of Augustine, he dipped deep into ancient philosophy, whence he borrowed chiefly Platonic notions, toward which the natural bent of his mind inclined him. Thus the connection between ancient

and modern philosophy, which Descartes thought he had definitively interrupted, was renewed in the very first generation that followed him, at the hands of his most illustrious successor. But Malebranche did not make himself a slave to Plato as Scholasticism had been subject to Aristotle. On the contrary, the mixture, or rather blending, of these Platonic elements with the Cartesian principles gave to Malebranche's doctrine an original flavor.

The great work on which Malebranche labored for ten years, and which appeared in 1674, was entitled *La Recherche de la Vérité*, or *The Search for Truth*. To begin with, whoever undertakes such a search is to make a careful distinction between rational evidence, the only sign of truth, and the false light of the senses, which, in spite of its apparent clearness, gives but deceitful information. Our senses produce vivid impressions upon us, but do not enlighten us. The light of reason, on the contrary, which seems cold, shows us things as they really are. Therefore, we must close our bodily eyes, and accustom ourselves to see only with our spiritual eyes.

This precept is often expressed in language which reminds us of Plato. Socrates, in the *Phædo*, represents the body as an element of confusion and darkness, obfuscating the natural clear-sightedness of the soul, which it subjects to gross and deceitful appearances; it restricts the soul to an imperfect reminiscence of the eternal realities, and is, in fact, a sort of prison from which the wise man's soul yearns

to be released. Similarly, Malebranche speaks of the tumult of the senses which prevents the soul from hearkening to the voice of reason. He then passes on by imperceptible degrees from the Platonic to the Christian point of view. The soul's subservience to the body becomes a consequence of the original fall; the dominance of the senses over the spirit is said to be the result of sin, and the soul's possession of truth to be communion with God. "The spirit stands, so to speak, between God and the body, between good and evil, between what illumines and what blinds it, what rules it well and what rules it ill, what may make it perfect and happy, and what is apt to make it imperfect and unhappy."

Thus, according to Malebranche, as well as according to Plato, philosophy first requires the soul to assume a different attitude from that which it occupied before reflecting. Things which are visible and tangible, which may be tasted and smelt, it first believed to be real: it shall henceforth look upon them as illusory. Things, on the contrary, which are neither seen nor touched, but are cognizable by the intellect alone, it shall look upon as the only ones which are real. Malebranche has no difficulty in establishing the truth of this precept, supporting it by Descartes's principles. He shows that the secondary qualities of bodies are all relative to the thinking subject. That property alone belongs to bodies which we conceive by means of our understanding—i. e., extension. Our senses therefore teach us nothing. We think we see the room in

which we are. We think we see the sun. It is a delusion, and it is certain that we do not. It is not even possible to conceive how we could see them; for in what way could such material objects act upon the immaterial soul, there being nothing in common between it and them?

Must we then reject entirely the data given by our senses as false and deceitful? No, says Malebranche; our senses are neither deceitful nor corrupt, if we make use of them only as regards their proper function; that is, the preservation of the body. They fulfill their duty admirably well, speedily warn the soul by means of pain and pleasure, by means of pleasant and unpleasant sensations of what it must do or refrain from doing for the preservation of life. * * * They represent instinct in us, and have its blind infallibility. If we had to depend on reflection for avoiding the various dangers which threaten our body at every moment, we should very soon perish. The senses are marvelously well suited for this office, and in most cases it is sufficient for us to trust to their spontaneous activity. But let us expect nothing more from them! Valuable as they are for our preservation, they are incapable of teaching us. Many of our errors arise from our neglecting to make this distinction. As our senses do not deceive us concerning what is beneficial or harmful, we fall into the habit of trusting to them in all things, even where they can only lead us astray.

This tendency is almost unavoidable. In order to make us heedful of the impressions made by the

senses, God caused them to be attended with pleasure and pain. A pin's prick, though conveying no distinct information (for we do not even know what takes place here in the nerves and brain), produces upon us a most vivid impression, and compels us to give our attention to it. We thus form the habit of judging of the reality of things by their practical interest for us; that is, we trust to the senses in order to know what things are, and in this we are mistaken.

If, therefore, we really know "outward objects," it is not by means of sensations, since these are dim and give us no reliable information. It is by means of *ideas*—i. e., of representations clear to the understanding and which have nothing in common with sensations. Ideas are in God, and the mind perceives them in God. When it discovers any truth, or sees things as they are in themselves, it sees them in God's ideas—that is, with a clear and distinct vision of what is in God, who represents them. Thus, every time the mind knows the truth it is united with God; in some measure it knows and possesses God.

For the demonstration of this celebrated theory of "vision in God," Malebranche depends upon the Cartesian principles. He defines the soul as that which thinks, and the body as that which has extension. An instinctive feeling persuades us that these two are united, and we feel confident of it. But we have no evidence of it, and we even see quite plainly that the mind and the body are two

things of quite opposite kinds. We do not, then, understand how something corporeal—that is, something which has extension—can produce upon the soul an impression which can be called knowledge, or how the soul can go out of itself to wander through the heavens*. The object of knowledge, therefore, can be nothing else than an idea. When I perceive the sun, for instance, whether it be above the horizon or not, whether I be musing or dreaming, matters little. In one case, indeed, my perception is true, and in the other false, and we are not without a means of distinguishing between them; but it is never the material object that I perceive, it is always the idea of the object that is present in my soul.

Beset by the objections raised against him, Malebranche gave several successive forms to his theory of the vision of ideas in God. We cannot here make a distinction between them; let it be sufficient to indicate the method by which he arrives at this theory. He examines, one after another, all the hypotheses which may explain our knowledge of ideas. He first eliminates the theory of "sensible images," which had been derived from antiquity by scholastic philosophers. This hypothesis increases, instead of solving, difficulties, and one cannot understand how sensible images, being something material, can be transformed into something spiritual, like ideas. Does, then, the human soul produce ideas spontaneously? It is mere

*"*Aller se promener dans les cieux.*"

human pride to imagine that the soul can produce anything. Such a supposition would imply that it is endowed with causality. Now, as will soon be shown, no creature is a cause. God alone acts in the Universe. Shall we say that ideas were created by God, together with the soul? A very improbable hypothesis, and not easily made to agree with God's wisdom. It would suppose "infinities of infinite numbers of ideas" to exist in each created soul. Is it not far more reasonable to suppose that ideas are eternally subsisting in God? We know them when God thinks best to reveal them to us. This hypothesis is not only the most "practical," but also the one which best shows us our dependence upon God. As space encompasses bodies, so does God encompass minds. To know is to partake of the divine intelligence. The ideas which represent God's creatures to our minds are but God's perfections corresponding to these very creatures and representative of them.

We perceive ideas only by means of pure understanding; for the world of ideas is a purely intellectual world to which the senses have no access. The worst sort of confusion would follow from mistaking sensations, which Malebranche terms the modalities of our soul, for ideas, which are in the divine intelligence. But there is no room for mistake in the matter, so completely do the characteristics of modalities differ from those of ideas. The modalities of the soul are changeable, ideas are immutable; modalities are particular, ideas are uni-

versal and general; modalities are contingent, ideas are eternal and necessary; modalities are dim and obscure, while ideas are very clear and luminous; modalities are but dimly though keenly felt, while ideas are clearly known, being the foundation of all sciences. And not only do we see in God the ideas of "outward" objects, but we also see in Him the axioms of reason, and such truths as Bossuet, following Augustine, termed eternal.

The hypothesis of the "vision in God," the most probable, and indeed the only probable one, according to Malebranche, seems to our common sense extremely paradoxical. It called forth the taunts of his contemporaries, and the well-known line:

"Lui qui voit tout en Dieu n'y voit pas qu'il est fou*."

Yet it is a legitimate corollary of the principles established by Descartes; and the theories of Spinoza and Leibniz on this point, though different in expression, are not very remote from that of Malebranche. Descartes had proved that we do not know objects through our senses, but by our understanding; and that, to the intuition of the mind, matter is merely what has extension. Now the science of extension is geometry. It is composed of truths which appear to the mind as universal and necessary. Kant denominates them "*a priori;*" Malebranche calls them immutable and eternal. Where is the primary cause of these truths, and consequently of the whole physical

*"He who sees all things in God sees not his own lunacy there."

world? Evidently not in my individual understanding, which is finite and perishable. It can only be in an understanding which is as infinite, eternal and necessary as those truths themselves. Descartes had already said that all our science is true only because God exists. Malebranche went a step farther, and asserted that there is no science save through our participation in the divine thought. We see the truth only when we see things as they really are, which we never do unless we see them in Him who contains them intelligibly.

Malebranche, as a good Cartesian, has a purely geometrical and mechanical conception of nature. "With extension alone," he says, "God produced all the admirable things we see in nature, and even what gives life and movement to animals." Yet, though Malebranche agreed with Descartes in saying that animals are machines and do not feel, he was evidently interested in the extraordinary discoveries just made by Swammerdam, Leewenhoek and several other scientific men with the help of the recently-invented microscope. The theory of "encased germs," though with Leibniz he accepted it as the most plausible theory of the time, leaves him only half satisfied. He easily understands how, by the mere power of mechanical laws, the tiny tree hidden in the seed will grow progressively, and gradually become the tall oak which we behold. No doubt the actual division of matter goes far beyond the reach of our senses, and it is probably the same with the organization of matter. A drop of

liquid, Leibniz says, is a pond full of fishes, and every drop of blood in one of those fishes is another pond full of fishes, and so on *ad infinitum*. Malebranche also concedes this, but he cannot so easily account, by the power of purely mechanical laws, for the preservation of species, each apart from the others, even to their minutest features. It is not so evident to him as to Descartes that with matter and the laws of motion one can completely account for a world like ours, including the plants and the animals. He would suppose something to exist besides, not unlike Plato's ideas, the "divine models," the "archetypes of beings," which live forever in God's mind, and which determine his choice among possible things. The permanence of species would seem to him inexplicable otherwise. Malebranche here stands half-way between Descartes and Leibniz. He begins, as the former does, with a geometrical conception of the science of nature; and almost finishes, like the latter, with a metaphysical conception, the predominant ideas of which are order and harmony.

We are hereby brought back to God. The sight of nature everywhere compels us to admire the simplicity and the fecundity of her ways. Malebranche feels vividly the beauty of nature. But, like most men of his time, he feels in her beauty chiefly the reason which it manifests. He sees in it, above all things, order. The idea of order is, I may say, pivotal in the philosophy of Malebranche; not only is it the ground principle of

his ethics, but it holds a no less important place in his metaphysical speculations. He conceives reality to be an assemblage of "orders," corresponding and subordinate to one another. Above the order of the physical world rises the order of moral realities, the one being ruled by the laws of magnitude or quantity, the other by the laws of quality or perfection. The order of grace comes next, not to supplant but to correct the order of nature. Even in the attributes and perfections of the divine essence, order also reigns. All these "orders" converge in harmonious unity, of which our feeble understanding can have but a very imperfect notion. They have led to the comparison of Malebranche's system with a magnificent palace—a vast and noble building, the richness and majesty of which, while flattering the imagination, afford reason supreme satisfaction. They might also be compared to the grand choral constructions of J. S. Bach, who also attains the sublime by the harmonious richness of a powerful creation in which order always rules.

Everything that is, owes its existence to God: all that we know, we know in God. But how do we know God Himself? How are we made sure of His existence? What do we know of His nature and attributes? In what measure can we understand His relation to the world?

In such a philosophy as that of Malebranche the existence of God is not called in question. From

the very first step which reason tries to take God overshadows it. If I am, God is; if I think, God is; if I know any truth, God is; if any phenomenon takes place, God is. Nothing can be or can take place without a cause, and there is no other cause than God. Therefore Malebranche might well regard a demonstration of the existence of God as superfluous. Yet he gives proofs of it, and he even thinks that some of the arguments usually proffered are not worthless. He does not reject the proof based on final causes. The contemplation of the order which reigns in nature often fills him with admiration for the Author of all these beauties, for there can be no doubt that we must postulate a mind in order to explain them. He reasons on this point as Voltaire did later. When I see a watch, I am right in concluding that there is an intelligence back of it, since mere chance cannot possibly have produced and combined all the wheels. How then should it be possible for chance and the conjunction of atoms to be capable of arranging in all men and animals the many various impulses, accurate and well proportioned, which we see in them, and for men and animals to beget others in their exact likeness?

This proof produces a strong impression upon the mind; but Malebranche was aware that, from a logical point of view, it is not unimpeachable. The most beautiful, the noblest and strongest proof that may be given of the existence of God is drawn from our idea of the infinite. That we have this

idea, is an undoubted fact. The very ones who deny the existence of God have this idea even while denying. Not only does the human mind conceive the idea of the infinite, but it conceives it even before the idea of the finite. For the idea of the infinite comes to us together with the very idea of being. In order to form an idea of a finite being, we subtract something from the general idea of being, which must therefore have existed before the other. Fénelon says much the same thing: that, in spite of appearances, the idea of the infinite is positive, and the idea of the finite negative, since the former represents being as unlimited and the latter represents it as limited—i. e., by a negation of whatever is beyond the limit. Therefore, Malebranche concludes, the mind perceives nothing save through the idea it has of the infinite, and all particular ideas are but portions of the general idea of the infinite. And from this he demonstrates in several ways the necessary existence of God.

Now, from the very fact of our having such an idea it evidently follows that God exists. This may be shown in several ways: first, as Descartes did, making use of the ontological argument. One has a right to assert concerning a thing all that one clearly conceives to be comprised in the idea which represents this thing. Now, I clearly conceive that the necessity of His existence is comprised in the idea of God. Therefore God exists. Malebranche was aware of the strength of the objec-

tions to which this proof is open. He endeavors to answer them by insisting (as Descartes had already done) upon the following point: that the idea of the infinite being, i. e., of God, is unlike any other; that it constitutes a unique case, to which ordinary rules are not applicable, and that what is not true as regards all other ideas is true as regards this one. Thus, while I may conceive the idea of a triangle, or of a mountain, without there existing any triangle or mountain, the idea of the infinite alone is of such a kind that, if I have this idea, the thing itself necessarily exists.

But to tell the truth, Malebranche transforms this proof in defending it. The form of the reasoning disappears, and our knowledge of God is presented as being immediate and intuitive. When we see a creature, Malebranche says—a body for instance—we do not see it in itself. We see it through an idea; that is, through the vision of certain perfections which are in God and which represent it. It might, therefore, be possible for us to see this creature, and a whole world of creatures, without their actually existing. God would only need to reveal them to our vision, without having created them in any other sense. But God Himself we do not thus see through an idea. "Creatures alone are visible through ideas which represent them even before the creatures are made. * * * The infinite, however, can be seen only in itself, for nothing finite can represent the infinite. If we think of God, He must exist. We cannot see the

idea of Him without Him." The theory of vision *in* God thus leads us, when at its highest flight, to a theory of the vision *of* God. To have an idea of God is not to possess a representation of God (which is impossible); it is to possess God Himself, in the feeble degree possible to human nature. Thus has the Cartesian proof become blended with Malebranche's own system. He no longer deduces the existence of God from the idea of God. He refuses to make a distinction between the idea of God and God Himself. "The infinite is its own idea."

Therefore the existence of God is the first of all truths, is truth itself, and the substance of all other truths, which subsist in it; we perceive them in the divine understanding. As truth is the natural goal of the soul, Malebranche may justly say that the soul is united to God far more closely than to its own body. The soul hears God within itself, in its inmost depth. When it hushes the tumult of the senses, it hears this divine voice which shows to it the absolute truth and goodness as the substance of its own truth and welfare. Reviving Plato's well-known comparison, Malebranche calls God the sun of the world of mind. "The sun that lights the mind is not like the sun which lights the body. It is never eclipsed and penetrates all things without its light being refracted." Unfortunately, in our present condition, being corrupted by sin, we often hide ourselves from that light and rather seek the darkness of the senses.

We have an immediate perception that God is; but we do not perceive what He is. For our sight is limited, and God's perfection is infinite. His substance contains an endless number of perfections and realities. Nor do we see it in its simplicity. God illumines us through certain of His perfections only, without showing Himself to us as He really is. Our minds can reach up to Him only as to the cause or substance of this or that reality, as for instance, of material extension. But God is, in His essence, the infinite Being in every way, the infinitely infinite Being. Therefore, God alone can conceive God. When we endeavor to understand Him we limit Him, and by this very act we deny Him part of His essence. The most that man can say is: "God is the One who Is." All particular beings exist only in so far as they participate in Him; but all created and all imaginable beings cannot fill the immensity of the Being. We behold the multitude of creatures in the infinity of the uncreated Being, but we do not see His unity distinctly. This comes from our seeing Him not so much according to His absolute reality as according to what He is with regard to all possible creatures, the number of which He may increase *ad infinitum* without their ever being equal to the reality which represents them. * * * An essential characteristic of the Infinite consists in being one and all things at the same time, composed, so to speak, of an infinite number of different perfections, and yet

so very simple that each of these perfections contains all the others without any real distinction.

This seems to border very closely upon Spinozism, a doctrine which Malebranche himself deemed "monstrous." In what does this God, who is at once a unity and an infinite multiplicity of infinite attributes, and who comprises in Himself all real and possible creatures, differ from the divine substance which, according to Spinoza, is the one only being? Is the difference that Malebranche conceives God as spiritual, whereas Spinoza admits of no hierarchy among the attributes of the divine Being? But Malebranche himself confesses that reason alone cannot teach us that God is spirit; this is taught us by the Holy Scriptures. Moreover, when we speak of the divine intelligence, we should carefully abstain from thinking it to be akin to our own. Let us not fall into the error of the "anthropomorphists." Even as God comprises within Himself all the perfections of matter, without being material, thus also does He comprise all the perfections of created spirits, without being a spirit such as we conceive spirits to be.

Yet however remote Malebranche may be from "anthropomorphism," and however severely he may blame those who "make the infinite Being human," he had a right to protest against the charge of Spinozism. Though his system appears to border closely upon that of Spinoza, it is really far removed from it. He seems to say the same things, but while using the same terms, he gives them a very different meaning, for it is a Christian mean-

ing. When he reads in Spinoza "*Deus, sive natura*," he is indignant at such horrible blasphemy; but when he himself says that he sees the multiplicity of creatures in the infinity of the uncreated Being, he congratulates himself on being led by his reason to repeat the saying of Paul the apostle: In Him we live and move and have our being. Listen to the first words of the *Méditations chrétiennes:* "As I am convinced that the eternal Word is the universal Reason of spirits, and that this same Word, when incarnate, is the author and perfector of our faith, I believe I ought to have Him speak in these Meditations as the true Master who teaches all men *by virtue of His authority and by the evidence of His lights.*"

We thus have two revelations confirming each other: the one was manifested in the Scriptures, the other is expressed to every man by his own reason. Thence, though God may be incomprehensible as regards His substance, He has revealed to us enough of Himself for us to adore Him. Inasmuch as He illumines us, and lets us participate through our reason in the realm of pure intellect, and in the love He causes us to have for Him, loves Himself, He becomes once again a God of wisdom, goodness and justice. The moral idea of order did not occur in Spinoza, since, according to him, God is necessarily all that He may be, and all his attributes are equal. Malebranche, on the contrary, says that God esteems and loves all things in proportion as they are lovable and estimable. He has

an invincible love for the immutable order which consists and can consist only in *the relations of perfection* between His attributes and the ideas which He comprises within His substance. In this we are far from Spinoza and again very near Leibniz. Like the latter, Malebranche appeals to the principle of sufficient reason (though he does not yet call it by this name) in order to explain, so far as the mystery of creation permits, the choice made by the divine will among an infinity of possible worlds. He then proceeds to explain the relation between the order of nature and that of grace; he shows how God foresaw from all eternity that the fall of man would be followed by the redemption, and how the supernatural or miraculous order does not disturb the natural order, but makes it complete. The transition from metaphysics to Christian theology is made imperceptibly, and it is the very characteristic of Malebranche's system that we cannot tell the moment when this transition takes place.

There is but one cause in the universe, and that is God. For a cause is that which produces or engenders an effect, and brings it to pass. Being a cause, then, means creating something, a power which belongs to God alone. Therefore, to suppose that a creature may be the cause of anything whatever is to make it divine and to participate in the most dangerous error of the ancient philosophy. It means falling into the sin of pride, and failing to recognize the dependence of all creatures

upon God. This appears evident enough if we consider only the essence of God, that of creatures, and the notion of cause; but it may also be shown by means of the principles laid down by Descartes.

The universe known to us is composed of spirits and bodies; that is to say, of thinking souls, and of objects with the quality of extension. Malebranche argues that a spirit never acts upon a body, nor a body upon a spirit, nor a body upon a body. Spirits indeed communicate with one another, but only through God; for God encompasses all spirits as space encompasses all bodies.

To say that the spirit never acts upon the body seems contrary to experience. If I *will* to move my arm, I move it; is not my volition the cause of the motion of my arm? No, answers Malebranche, unless you simply mean by "cause" the antecedent which regularly precedes a given phenomenon. But if the word "cause" means to you "what produces" the phenomenon, then when you say that your volition is the cause of the motion of your arm, you go beyond what is known to you. All that you are conscious of is your volition, accompanied by a confused feeling of effort, and then the motion of your arm. But *how* the volition produces the motion is so little evident that you have no idea of it. In order to move your arm, you must have animal spirits, and send them through certain nerves into certain muscles which they swell or shorten, for this is how the arm attached to them moves, or else we do not yet know how it is done,

as some others think. And we see that men who do not even know whether they have spirits, nerves and muscles, move their arms, and indeed move them more skillfully and easily than those who are most versed in anatomy. Therefore, to say that my volition is the cause of the motion of my arm, is to give for the fact an explanation which I do not even understand, and which is a wrong one. But to say that God has willed that every time I have this or that volition, this or that motion is to take place in my arm, is an intelligible and satisfactory explanation, for it is certain that God is an efficient cause. So my volition is but the occasional cause of the motion of my arm. God is the real cause. A true cause, Malebranche says with deep meaning, is a cause between which and its effect the mind perceives a necessary connection. Now, this necessary connection I do not perceive between my volition and my movements. Experience alone makes it known to me.

A similar demonstration is given concerning the alleged action of the body upon the mind. A pin pricks my finger; is it not evident that this prick is the cause of the pain I immediately feel? Not at all, answers Malebranche. All that experience teaches me is, that when a pin pricks me I feel pain; but it does not teach me that the pin acts upon my mind, or has any power whatever. Here again a relation of constant succession is wrongly transformed into one of causality. And we are not to

bring forward, as an explanation of the action of the body upon the soul, a "power resulting from their union," as Descartes had done. Malebranche opposes Descartes by means of Descartes himself. This "power" is not a clear idea; are we to return to the "occult qualities" of scholastic philosophers? In fact we cannot understand how a substance, the whole nature of which is to have extension (the body) can produce the slightest modification in another substance (the soul), which has no extension. And since the fundamental principle in the Cartesian method is to hold nothing as true unless we conceive it clearly and distinctly, we must not accept the notion of the body acting upon the soul, which notion must needs be a confused one. It is an instinctive feeling, says Malebranche, which persuades me that my soul is united to my body, or that my body is a part of my being; I have no evidence of it. If philosophers were to judge by the evidence and light of reason, they would soon recognize that the mind and the body are two things of exactly opposite kinds; that the mind cannot through itself be united to the body, and that only through the union between ourselves and God is the soul wounded when the body is struck.

Lastly, the body does not act upon the body. For, if the essence of the body is extension, it is evident that bodies may be moved, but cannot move of their own accord. The notion of force or power has no connection whatever with the definition of the body. So that we never really see a

body modifying the state of another body. We see the modification following the meeting of the two bodies. We may say correctly that this meeting is the constant antecedent of the phenomenon. But we have no right to say that it is the cause of it, for we do not even understand how it could possibly produce it.

Such then is the greatest, the most fruitful and the most necessary of all principles. We find in the universe but the *occasional causes* of the effects which God Himself produces. And as God does not act by means of particular volitions, He has regulated all the "infinitely infinite" combinations of physical with physical and of physical with moral things in such a way that phenomena appear to us as subjected to necessary laws, and that like causes always produce like effects. We may indeed go on using the current language; we may say that the soul moves its body; that it is influenced by the impressions the body receives, and that bodies in motion transmit to each other part of their momentum. We may do this, just as we say that the sun rises or sets. It is enough if we know that all the causes we speak of are purely occasional, and that the only real cause is God.

This remarkable theory marks a decisive stage in the history of philosophy. With regard to the past, it completes the Cartesian revolution, and consummates the defeat of scholastic physics. Descartes, in his conception of nature, had gone so far as to dispense with the "nutritive soul," the "loco-

motor soul" and the "sensient soul," but chose to explain all phenomena by the laws of motion only. It is the very idea of "nature" that Malebranche attacks. The religion of the ancients made nature divine. The philosophy of Aristotle saw in the φύσις the inward power which gives to beings their shape and growth, and builds the ascending scale of genera and species. Malebranche shows that nature is but a word, a delusion, which the philosophy of clear ideas drives away. "I owe nothing to my nature, nothing to the imaginary nature of philosophers. I owe everything to God and His decrees." Natural causality is the last of the "occult qualities"; it must disappear like the others. God has linked His works together, but He has not created any *linking entities* between them. In short, as a worthy successor of Descartes, Malebranche replaces the confused scholastic notion of *cause* by the clear scientific notion of *law*.

In this he forestalls the future. Before Leibniz, Hume or Kant he showed the importance of the idea of causality in metaphysics. His criticism of the common notion of cause is a masterly one. Not even Hume excels him in showing that the connection between cause and effect escapes us precisely where we think we lay hold of it, and therefore that it is not a notion due to experience.

Malebranche speaks a metaphysical and theological language. Strip his thought of this form, preserve the substance and give it a definite expression, and no theory of causality agrees better than

his with the spirit and practice of modern science. Bacon, and after him Descartes, had already recognized that the science of nature is not concerned with final causes. Malebranche goes a step further. He exempts it even from seeking after efficient causes, or after any causes whatever. Henceforth science will only have to determine constant successions, "reciprocal modalities," and to state how such and such a phenomenon varies when a certain other phenomenon undergoes a given change. Now, this is exactly the point of view of modern physics. This science has wisely ceased to inquire why opium makes us sleep, and restricts its attention to phenomena and the laws of phenomena. What Malebranche says of the relation between body and soul, and of the action which bodies exercise upon one another, is no less apt to please our scientific men. On this point none ever contributed more than this great metaphysician to purge positive science of the popular metaphysics which for so long a time falsified its definitions and paralyzed its progress. In this sense, the theory of occasional causes is a worthy sequel to the Cartesian theory of science.

Although we may see all things in God, it does not follow that we do so. We see in God only things of which we have an idea; and there are things which we see without any ideas. Among the latter, Malebranche reckons the soul. The soul knows itself through feeling, or, as he calls it,

through consciousness. We know of our soul only what we feel taking place within ourselves. Malebranche here differs from Descartes, and the reasons he gives for doing so are interesting.

The soul, Descartes had said, is more easily known than the body. In a certain sense Malebranche admits this, but he wishes to make a distinction. True, the existence of the soul is more easily known than that of the body, and up to this point Descartes is right. For it is sufficient for the soul to think in order to know that it exists, whereas the soul may have a clear notion of the body without proving the existence of the latter. But, on the other hand, the nature of the soul is not so well known to us as that of the body. For, turning away from the senses and the imagination, let us conceive bodies in their essence, i. e., in their idea, which is one of extension; there is no clearer and more perfect knowledge than this. This idea permits us to construct every figure which may be drawn in space, and to evolve all the properties of these figures; a science is opened to us which has no other limits than those set by the weakness of our intellect. This idea is "a quite luminous one." What is wanting to our knowledge of extension of figures and of motion is not a defect of the idea which represents them, but of our mind that considers them.

Can I say the same thing concerning the knowledge of the soul? Can I undertake to build such a science *a priori*, as I do geometry? Can I form a

"quite luminous" idea of this? Impossible. Experience alone informs me of what is taking place within my soul, and I have no means of ascertaining what it does not reveal to me. My inward consciousness teaches me that I am, think, will and suffer; but it does not inform me what I am, the nature of my thought, of my will, of my feelings, of my passions, of my pains. Even the facts of which consciousness advises me, it does not show me clearly and distinctly. I do not understand, for instance, the relation between one state of my soul and the concomitant or following state, between a given idea and the pain following it; I cannot analyze a state of the soul and reduce it to its constituent elements as I might reduce to its elements a figure in space and determine its properties *a priori*. When I feel a pain, I feel it without knowing it; God, who has the idea of my soul, knows that pain without feeling it.

If I had this idea, which God in His wisdom has denied me, if the substance of my soul were "luminous" to me, I should only have to examine this idea in order to know, independently of and previous to experience, what I should feel in a given contingency. I should not require to hear a concert in order to know how sweet harmony is, or to taste a fruit in order to know its flavor. How many modifications of the soul are known to me? A very limited number, no doubt, in comparison with all those that are possible. A mere piece of wax may undergo an endless number of modifications,

since it may assume every geometrical shape known to us, and an infinite number of other shapes besides. Is it not likely that the soul, "which is far nobler than the body," may undergo innumerable modifications, but that I am ignorant of these because the substance of the soul is hidden from me?

Thus we do not know all the modifications of which our soul is capable; we know only a part of them, and that an infinitely small one. And the little that we know does not enlighten us concerning its nature, for, to use Malebranche's powerful expression, whereas ideas are "light," our modalities are "darkness." But let us not complain of that darkness; it is meant for our own good. If we had as clear a notion of the soul as we have of the body, it would show us too plainly how different the former is from the latter, thus weakening the union between soul and body which was designed by God. The very contemplation of the idea of space is to the geometrician a source of incomparable delight; what pleasure would not have been afforded to man by a similar contemplation of the idea of the soul! In an ecstacy of delight he would have forgotten to "lead his body out to pasture." Therefore, God has done wisely in giving us but a very imperfect view of our soul, though sufficient for this life. We know enough about it to be persuaded of the spirituality of the soul, of its immortality, of its freedom, and of a few other attributes which we must not ignore. We know but little, but what we know is not false. In this

way we escape from another great danger. If we knew our soul through an idea, if its substance were cognizable by us, we might believe we were "our own lights," and thence fall into the worst mistake a creature can commit—i. e., to believe ourselves able to do something of our own power, attributing to ourselves an impious independence, and infringing upon the prerogatives of God, who alone is a cause. Such a thought is "horrible" to Malebranche. Hereafter, when our body shall be clad in immortality, when we are freed from sin, God will probably grant us the contemplation of spirits in their essence.

Let us lay aside these considerations, which border upon theology. Malebranche's theory of the self-knowledge of the soul teemed with philosophical consequences. It led his successors to reflect on the nature, limits and range of consciousness; it even forestalled the distinction which Kant was to establish later on between "empirical consciousness," which merely informs us of the phenomena of our soul, and the strictly intellectual function of the understanding, that is, the thought's consciousness of itself. Finally, by showing the slight and fragmentary nature of our knowledge of mental facts, Malebranche opened the way for the theory of the unconscious life of the soul, which was to receive so much attention.

Malebranche's ethics is closely linked to the rest of his system, being, like the latter, both ra-

tional and Christian. Silence your senses, imagination and passions, and you shall hear the pure voice of the inward truth, the clear and evident answers of our common Master. He teaches us not only what we are to believe, but also what we are to do. He reveals to us, along with what is true, what is beautiful and good, for he shows us the relations of perfection among things, and the order in which we should prefer them one to another. Above all, he shows us the very principle of order—i. e., the supremely wise and kind Being who gives us existence, thought and will. When we lavish upon finite beings, save by His express command, the love which God intends for Himself: in a word, when we disobey him, we do wrong and we are sinful. Shall we say that it is God—being the only cause in the universe—who acts within us, and that we are not responsible for our sins; that He has permitted, if not decreed them? Malebranche replies to this formidable objection. It is true we have no existence or activity save by God's will. His will, to be sure, makes us seek our own happiness, but it does not make us seek it in the gratification of the senses rather than in obedience to Himself. If being able to sin is a power, this power we have. We have sufficient liberty not to cast on the all-perfect Being the responsibility for our sins. God is just, and we were all born under the curse of original sin.

We shall not follow Malebranche through his theological explanations. Let us come back to the purely human domain of moral things, and ob-

serve that he has spoken of these with remarkable aptness and penetration. This "meditative" man is a keen observer of human nature. Those parts of the *Recherche de la Vérité* which treat of the errors caused by our imagination, our inclination, or our passions are justly celebrated. Being pleasant and lively, they contributed in no small degree to the success of the work. They won to it a great many readers who, though not engrossed in metaphysics, were charmed by the originality and liveliness of the author's moral reflections.

Malebranche often opposes his ethics to that of the Stoics. The latter in his eyes represent heathen pride, and their virtues are but vices to a Christian soul that knows nature to be powerless without God. He combats their paradoxes, he maintains that pain is an evil, and that men must needs seek happiness. Nor does he agree that man, in his present state, being closely bound to the body, can suppress its passions; and this indeed is no duty, as the passions are not essentially evil. Only we do not make use of our passions as we should. There are beneficent passions, as, for instance, the desire to discover the truth, to acquire sufficient light to regulate our behavior, to be useful to others, etc.; there are also wrong or dangerous ones, as a desire to acquire reputation, to gain certain standing, to rise above our fellow-creatures. * * * And it often happens that even our most irrational passions more strongly urge us to seek the truth, and afford us more pleasant consola-

tions for the pains we find therein than the most righteous and rational passions would. Malebranche excels in discovering the hidden motives of human actions; in pointing out the means of combating them when we must, and of turning them to good account when we can. He has a most delicate psychological sense, and his clear-sightedness may even occasionally be merciless. The passage in which he perforates the vanity of Montaigne is a little masterpiece.

A general view of Malebranche's works shows that he carried out the program he had set for himself. He established the conformity of his rational doctrine with the Christian dogma, without the latter being altered, and without reason being obliged to give up its rights. This agreement is not brought about by dialectical tricks, by prodigious feats of dexterity and suppleness, leaving upon the reader's mind an uncomfortable feeling of perplexity. We do not wonder, as we sometimes do with Leibniz, whether the author is entirely sincere, and whether he does not seek the reconciliation merely for the sake of peace. Malebranche produces quite another impression, and a perfectly genuine one. We feel that he clings with his whole soul to his faith and his philosophy. "O! Theodore," he exclaims in one of his finest *Entretiens sur la Métaphysique*, "how clear your principles are, how solid, how worthy of a Christian! And how lovely and touching they are also!" Malebranche's

philosophical thought is perfectly sincere. He is checked by no after-thought and paralyzed by no timidity. He shrinks from no correctly deduced consequences. What need has he to fear, since reason and the divine Word are one? Hence reason cannot, if its method is sound, come to any conclusion which may alarm a Christian conscience.

An admirable metaphysical system was the fruit of such candid boldness and pious temerity. Malebranche was thereby enabled to say, as a Christian, a great part of what Spinoza said as a free-thinker. He could, at the same time, be the idealist that had not distinctly appeared in Descartes; and this he was, with a fine logical passion. He paved the way for Berkeley, Hume and Kant. His glory was great while he lived, and his influence remained considerable in the eighteenth century in France and in England. In our days, his doctrine seems to have sunk somewhat into the background, between Descartes, from whom he proceeds, and the idealistic philosophers who came after him. But aside from the fact that these philosophers owe to him many of their leading ideas, Malebranche still has the merit, rare in all countries and unique in France, of having built up a religious philosophy which is not merely a philosophy inspired by religion.

CHAPTER III.

PASCAL.

It seems equally difficult to decide whether to include Pascal among the French philosophers or not. The object of his life's chief work is both by persuasion and by demonstration to bring lost souls back to the Christian belief. Philosophical speculation in itself has very little interest for him, since unaided it cannot lead to faith. Therefore he cultivates it only in so far as it can serve his purpose. It is to him one of many means, not an end in itself.

Pascal has been called a skeptic. But such an interpretation of the *Pensées* is scarcely regarded as warranted to-day. If to make human reason conscious of its own weakness and limitations, to make it realize that its knowledge is but relative, and that the absolute is beyond its reach, is to be skeptical, there are few philosophers but deserve the name. Pascal never questioned the validity of human reason in its own proper domain. He even trusted it so far as to believe it capable of realizing its own inadequacy when confronted with the problem of human destiny and the necessity of a special revelation. Pascal wants us to believe, but he is also desirous of having reason acknowledge that it is necessary to believe. This attitude is not that of a skeptic.

Others have termed him a mystic. It is true, his passionate and ecstatic faith sometimes found expression in brief mystical effusions. But nothing is less mystical than Pascal's habits of thought. Mystical philosophers, as a rule, are obscure, impetuous, full of metaphors and allegories. They are poor logicians; they speak the language of passion, and their influence is exercised chiefly through the infectious warmth of their sentiments. Pascal is clearness and precision itself. The care he bestows upon his style nowise impairs the correctness of his thought. The "spirit of geometry" and the "spirit of acuteness," which he analyzed so well, are both his. Even when he merely wishes to persuade, his ideas are linked together in strictly logical sequence, and the conclusions are drawn from the premises as in a demonstration. One can easily imagine that Pascal would have admired greatly the zeal of the Christian mystics for their faith, but not their mysticism. When he writes: "God apparent to our hearts, not to our reason;" or, "The heart has its own reasons which are unknown to reason"—these are not the maxims of a mystical philosophy which makes the understanding subordinate to sentiment. They are, properly speaking, Christian maxims, unconnected with any philosophical doctrine whatsoever. Those who are in a state of grace immediately perceive, without any argument, what others are unable to perceive in spite of all the efforts of their reason. The "heart," therefore, means here the nature of man, in so far as it is re-

deemed from the corruption of sin, or is saved by Jesus Christ. Nothing is so incompatible with Pascal's general design as adherence to a system of philosophy, even a mystical philosophy.

Yet it would be inconceivable for a history of French philosophy to pass by Pascal's name in silence. Though he cannot be ranked in any category of philosophers, nevertheless, owing to his powerful mind and to the matchless splendor of his style, he exercised a deep influence on French thought. He is by far the greatest of all those moralists of whom France produced such a vast number, authors of "maxims," *Pensées*, "characters," whose chief aim was the analysis of the human heart and of the working of human passions. He rises above them by the whole height of an intelligence not unequal to the most arduous problems in science and philosophy; and if he did not investigate these problems thoroughly, if frequently he cast upon them only a cursory glance, it was because his faith made it an imperative duty for him to employ his genius in other directions.

In this respect the history of his mind is an instructive one. "I devoted much time to the study of the abstract sciences," he says in the *Pensées*, "and the little information to be found in them made me sick of them." But this was not the only reason for his choice. If he abandoned his geometrical and physical researches for religion, it was not merely because what we know of these sciences

is nothing in comparison with that of which we shall be forever ignorant; it was also because he deemed such an occupation not the most suitable one for a Christian. Malebranche frequently ridicules men of science who spend their lives at a telescope watching the course of a star, or become lost in the depths of erudition in order to elucidate a point in ancient history, but who, during that time, forget to study themselves, and even to live. Pascal also thinks such an occupation a vain and futile one. He adds that it is dangerous, and in some cases even sinful. Curiosity or a craving for knowledge, as well as lust, or a craving for enjoyment, is a consequence of sin; and though the vices engendered by the former may be less ignoble than those resulting from the latter, the temptation is all the more to be dreaded, and they lead the soul no less surely into perdition.

No science of outward objects can console me in times of affliction for my ignorance of morals; but the science of morals can always console me for my ignorance of objective sciences. By "a science of morals" Pascal most certainly did not mean the moral science of philosophers. The latter science was never able to discover more than partial and incomplete aspects of the truth; it mistook these for the entire truth, and therefore drew false conclusions from them. Pascal meant to designate by the term such knowledge of himself as man can obtain by reflecting upon his own nature, his place in the universe and the destiny he may expect; for

such reflection, carefully followed out, leads him to the threshold of the true religion. This is the only science of real importance to man, the only one which bears upon what is indispensable for him to know. It is only because we know not how to study it that we seek after other things. Those who have faith are the happiest of men; for not only are they in no need of human science, but when they do apply their minds to it, they deal with it as it should be dealt with, and far from its being a danger to them, they turn it to the advantage of religion. Those who have no faith, and yet are not sunk in stupid indifference, should try to understand themselves, and if unable to do so, then to discover why this is impossible for them. This is the only human means to bring them nearer to salvation.

We shall therefore distinguish two periods in Pascal's life: the first, in which he busied himself with mathematical and physical sciences, and the second, in which, being thoroughly convinced of the vanity of these sciences, he confined himself to the science of morals.

As a natural philosopher Pascal was one of the most pronounced in his advocacy of the rights of experience and reason as against the method of authority. The fragment of the *Traité du Vide* expresses, in a wonderfully eloquent style, ideas which Bacon, Descartes and many others had previously advocated. Pascal's method of demonstrating them is decisive; by his very analysis of the notions of

science and of antiquity he determines in what case and in what measure respect is due to the opinions of the ancients.

Here Pascal even throws light upon a point already touched by Bacon, but neglected by Descartes. In laying down the first rule of his method, "To hold nothing as true unless one clearly knows it to be such," Descartes based his reasons entirely upon the abstract idea of science and upon the model of mathematics. To him these were sufficient grounds for regarding everything that preceded him as null and void, and for ignoring tradition absolutely. He proposed to build up a philosophical system as if none had ever existed before him. Pascal, on the contrary, analyzes this confused idea of tradition, and derives thence the idea of progress. He represents mankind in its entirety as a single man living forever and learning continually. Had not Descartes been so wholly taken up with his desire to abolish scholastic philosophy, he also might have noticed, were it but in geometry and astronomy, the onward march of scientific knowledge, which is the most luminous illustration of progress that can be obtained. Pascal's idea is a remarkable one, inasmuch as it implies the continuity of progress. We shall find it reviving in the eighteenth century, under various forms, until the natural sciences, and particularly biology, substitute for this rather elementary notion of uninterrupted progress the more complex conceptions of evolution and adaptation.

Pascal's views of scientific method betray at almost every point the influence of Descartes. Like Descartes, he has but little esteem for formal logic; true logic is to be found in mathematics. A method of avoiding error is sought by every one. Logicians profess to know the way to it, but geometricians alone reach it, and real demonstrations do not exist outside their science and its attendant branches. Geometry therefore is the only true science, and this distinction it owes to the "order" which it follows. (Descartes had said similarly, "The method consists wholly in the order to be observed," etc.) Lastly, even as mathematics furnished Descartes with the idea of his philosophical method, so geometry suggested to Pascal that of a "still loftier and more finished" one. But, unlike Descartes, who thought he had found the demonstration of the true philosophy, Pascal believes that a perfect method is beyond the reach of man. Geometry has to take for granted the definitions from which it proceeds and the axioms on which it rests, whereas a perfect procedure would define and demonstrate everything. Geometricians, however, are quite justified in not demonstrating that two quantities which are equal to a third are equal to each other, and in not giving a definition of space, time, and number, for such explanations as they might give of these notions would create obscurity rather than enlightenment. It is sufficient if their definitions and axioms be so perfectly clear and evident as absolutely to preclude denial. But still it is an imperfection in

their science that these things have to be taken for granted.

Thus geometry, although the least imperfect of human sciences, can demonstrate nothing save by admitting undemonstrable principles, and define nothing save by using undefinable terms. The question, whence these principles and notions are derived is a serious subject of discussion among philosophers. Some ascribe their origin to experience, others to the independent activity of the mind. According to Pascal, these principles spring from the "heart;" that is, we believe in them instinctively, and such a belief is as firm as any which reasoning can engender in us. The "heart" tells us that there are three dimensions in space, and that the succession of numbers is infinite. Principles we feel, propositions we infer, and both with certainty, although by different means. And it would be as absurd for reason to ask the heart for proofs of its first principles before accepting them as for the heart to ask reason to feel all the propositions it demonstrates before conceding their correctness.

This is therefore no drawback to geometry. It merely takes for granted that we know what is meant by the words *motion*, *number*, *space*. Without stopping for useless definitions, it penetrates into the very nature and discovers the wonderful properties of these three things, "which," says Pascal, speaking as a true Cartesian, "comprise the whole universe." But if we try to carry our reflection higher, and to apply it to these principles themselves, we are

stopped at the very first step and obliged to confess our ignorance. "Our soul is placed in our body, where it finds number, time, dimension; it calls this nature or necessity, and cannot think otherwise." Seldom was Pascal more profound than in these few words. He outlines here the idea of the relativity of knowledge. He intimates that the necessity of natural laws may possibly be only the necessity of the laws of our own thought, and that these fundamental laws, both of thought and of nature, may also, in some way unknown to us, proceed from our human constitution. Therefore, "what goes beyond geometry is beyond our reach."

Accordingly, not only are the sensible qualities of bodies relative to the sentient mind (as Descartes had already shown in contrasting sensation with the knowledge of the understanding, which sees things as they really are), but this very knowledge of the understanding cannot be looked upon as absolute; it also is relative to the intelligent subject. For our most urgent reason for acknowledging the truth of its principles is that we cannot think without them. Kant says, afterward, that, by the very nature of our understanding, things-in-themselves are beyond our reach, and that all our knowledge is confined to the world of phenomena. Pascal is certainly very far from anticipating the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and he doubtless would have seen no necessity for undertaking so enormous a work, but he nevertheless touched here upon one of its most important problems.

The critique of the faculties of the human understanding, which was not in Pascal's plan, is partly represented in his *Pensées* by the consideration of the Infinite, the idea of which plays an important part in his philosophy. According to him, we know that the Infinite exists, but we are ignorant of its nature. We know the existence of infinite number and of infinite space, but we are quite unable to form conceptions of them. We know, at least, that the finite is incommensurable with the infinite. Therefore, man, being finite, has no standard for the idea of the infinite; is lost and swallowed up in it. In this infinite sphere, the center of which is everywhere and the circumference nowhere — where do we stand? The question is of course unanswerable. "For what is man in nature? Nothing as compared with the infinite, everything as compared with nothingness—a mean between nothing and everything. Being thus utterly powerless to comprehend the extremes, for him the end and the principle of things are forever wrapped in impenetrable mystery. He is incapable, in fine, of conceiving either the nothingness from which he is derived, or the infinite in which he is ingulfed."

From this it follows that Nature is as incomprehensible as God Himself who created it. It is therefore useless to reduce the science of nature to the basis of geometry, as Descartes does (Pascal does not question here the legitimacy of the procedure); it is useless to establish a geometrical "order," as the most perfect that man can attain to. It must

still be admitted that between infinite space and the space which we conceive there is a great gulf fixed, and that this clearest of all our sciences is based on principles which we do not understand. And if, instead of reflecting upon the object of science, we reflect upon the mind which makes science, the notion of the infinite brings us to the same confession; for we then perceive that our understanding, in the order of intelligence, holds the same place as our body in the order of nature.

This parallelism (a genuinely Cartesian one) involves conclusions which Pascal draws at once. Even as our body is but an imperceptible speck in comparison with infinite space, so our understanding, in spite of all its exertions, is infinitely remote from the perfect comprehension of things. Whether contemplating them from above or from below, it is still equally far from the end. We are sequestered in an unknown region of the universe, from which it were sheer madness to think of escaping. We are likewise confined to a certain degree of intelligence, above which our human faculties prevent our rising. In the range of thought, as well as of space, we are a mean between nothing and everything, infinitely remote both from lifeless, unthinking matter and from that Absolute Thought which comprehends Being while creating it. Our knowledge is subject to certain conditions. Man's pretension to absolute knowledge can spring only from an absurd—one might almost say, infinite—presumptuousness.

If, therefore, in speaking of science, Pascal is now sympathetic and admiring, now scornful and derisive, the diversity of his language is easily explained, and we need not suppose that Pascal, after admitting the validity of human reason in the earlier part of his life, despaired of it in the latter and abandoned himself to skepticism. It is sufficient to observe that in some passages Pascal views science from the standpoint of the finite and in others from that of the infinite. In the first passages, when considering science from a purely human point of view, he finds it to be logically unassailable (at least as regards geometry) and he extends this praise to "what imitates it," probably alluding to a philosophy of the nature of Descartes's, which vies with mathematics in precision. But when considering science and philosophy from the point of view of the infinite, their vanity, weakness and uselessness appear obvious to him directly, for there is no proportion between the human mind, which is finite, and the infinite object with which science is concerned. Thus Pascal may say, without reference to moral or religious considerations: "Philosophy (that is the science of nature) is not worth an hour's pains. * * * To write against those who pursue the sciences * * * to scoff at philosophy —that is to be the true philosopher."

For the same reasons, and without being self-contradictory, Pascal shows himself alternately favorable and hostile to Cartesianism; yet this is no reason for inferring that he has changed his opinion. If

there must be a science of physics, he evidently prefers that of Descartes to that of Aristotle. What he thinks ridiculous is the expectation of attaining to a complete and definitive explanation of nature. Therefore, he does not hesitate to praise the Cartesian doctrine when speaking of it as a geometrician or natural philosopher; he even admires the *cogito* and the conclusions inferred from it by Descartes. But when he compares this philosophy with the infinity of nature, which is the object of its study, he finds it no less bold and presumptuous than the others. The more closely he considers the infinite, the less interested he becomes in geometry and natural sciences; not that they seem to him less true than they did before, but that he sees the vanity of them more clearly. Another science attracts him—the science of man, in which all his dearest concerns are at stake.

As we know, the philosophers of old achieved no true science of man, or of morals. Pascal, however, was far from rejecting as worthless all that they had said on the subject. Two sects appeared to him particularly worthy of esteem, for each of them had partly descried the truth: the Stoics, represented by Epictetus, and the Epicureans, represented by Montaigne.

Epictetus knew the duties of man admirably well. He repeatedly stated that man's only study and desire should be to recognize and obey the will of God. He wished man to be persuaded that God

governs all things with justice, to submit to Him willingly, and always to have before his eyes the thought of death and of the most unbearable misfortunes, thus triumphing over mean thoughts and immoderate desires. But after speaking of the duties of man in language such as would befit a Christian, Epictetus fails to acknowledge man's powerlessness. He is carried away by pride. He falls into serious error by presuming too much on man's strength. He does not perceive that the nature of man, alone and unaided, is incapable of fulfilling its duty toward God. He boasts of man's liberty, whereas he is really a slave to sin; he extols man's power, likening it to that of the gods, whereas he has been corrupt and miserable ever since the original fall. And so this admirable system of ethics leads to doctrines of "diabolical pride."

Montaigne falls into the opposite error. This philosopher has an incomparable faculty of making men realize their own weakness. He overthrows by imperceptible degrees all that is looked upon by men as most certain, not in order to establish the contrary, for certitude is his especial aversion, but merely to show that, since appearances favor equally both conclusions, we cannot possibly know whereon to ground our belief. He shows how reason lends itself to all purposes and how hollow its principles, even those which are regarded as firmest and most natural, shows the errors into which man is inevitably allured by his imagination, the tyranny exercised over him by custom and example, and his

ridiculous self-assumption. Thus reason, being "irretrievably foiled by its own weapons," is reduced to silence, and so abased that it can no longer decide whether it is superior or equal to the instinct of animals.

But Montaigne, too, thinks like a heathen. He shows admirably man's natural helplessness, which Epictetus ignored; but with a laxity doubly shameful in a Christian, he neglects the duties of man, which Epictetus knew so well. He follows custom and instinct, and thus, even as the Stoic is led astray by his pride, the Epicurean is led astray by his sloth.

Would, then, the solution consist in accepting both Epictetus's and Montaigne's conclusions, merely placing them in juxtaposition? Shall we obtain the true science of morals by regarding the duties of man as Epictetus did, and his helplessness as Montaigne did? No; such a solution is impossible. Montaigne does not complete Epictetus; he directly contradicts him. Placing them together would result in nothing except strife and mutual destruction; for as the one has established certitude and the other doubt, and the one has depicted the grandeur of man and the other his weakness, both their errors and their truths are mutually nullified. To reach an acceptable solution, we must discover a higher point of view, from which the contradictory elements will be reconcilable.

In spite of the diversity of the problems in question the method here followed by Pascal offers a striking analogy to that employed afterward by

Kant in overcoming the antinomies of pure reason. In the third antinomy especially, Kant shows that reason cannot decide between two conflicting propositions. Reason cannot give up the idea that there are free causes in the universe, as for instance, man's will; but it also does not think it possible to give up the idea of the necessary concatenation of causes and effects. The interest of morals forbids that liberty should be sacrificed; the interest of science demands determinism. How does Kant overcome the antinomy? By showing that the two statements are not absolutely contradictory, but are only so in a certain sense, and that, *from different points of view*, they are both true. *In time* it is true that every phenomenon must needs be the result of antecedent phenomena. But *out of time* the law of causality is no longer necessary, and nothing justifies us in asserting of "things-in-themselves" what we know to be true as regards phenomena. So that determinism remains true in the world of experience, while liberty also is possible in that of absolute reality. The antinomy is overcome.

In the same way the moral science of philosophers, according to Pascal, results in a seemingly insoluble antinomy. Man cannot be incurably helpless, as Montaigne says, and at the same time have duties imposed upon him such as are pointed out by Epictetus; yet both of them were right. What, then, shall raise us to the higher point of view from which this contradiction disappears? Reason by itself is unable to do so. Its most strenuous exer-

tions may carry it as far as Epictetus or Montaigne, but not beyond them. This the Gospel alone can do. It reconciles these contradictions by a purely divine art; and by uniting all that is true, and by rejecting all that is false, makes of the result a truly celestial body of wisdom, wherein the opposites which to human doctrine were irreconcilable are found to agree. And the reason of this success is that the philosophers of the world have always *put contrary things together in one and the same category*, the one attributing man's grandeur to nature, and the other his weakness to the same source—a formal contradiction; whereas faith has always taught us to place them *in different categories*, attributing all infirmities to nature, and all perfections to the grace of God. Man in the helpless state conceived by Montaigne is man fallen and corrupted by sin. Man able to fulfill the duties conceived by Epictetus is another man, regenerated and redeemed by Christ, supported by God's grace. Here also the antinomy is overcome.

There remains, however, an essential difference between the case of Kant and that of Pascal. Never for a moment does Kant abandon the ground of philosophy, and the elements of his solution are supplied to him by his own *Critique of Pure Reason*. But according to Pascal the antinomy of the science of morals would have remained forever insoluble, had not God condescended to enlighten us. Pascal abandons the domain of reason and appeals to faith. In order to justify such a serious step he

had to show its absolute necessity; in other words, he had to demonstrate that the antinomy could not possibly be solved in any other manner. The science of man must appear as evident and easy to grasp from Pascal's Christian point of view as it is absurd and unintelligible from any other point of view.

In this sense, Pascal's *Entretien avec M. de Saci sur Epictète et Montaigne* may be looked upon as a sketch, afterward to become a completed picture in the *Pensées*. We see him, in this latter work, expatiating on the grandeur and misery of man with such intensity that the strokes never seem to him strong enough or the contrast sufficiently conveyed to the reader. "What a chimera man is, what a strange monster, what a chaos, what a bundle of contradictions, what a prodigy! Judge of all things, and a miserable worm; a depository of truth, and a sink of uncertainty and error; at once the glory and the scum of the universe! * * * If he extols himself, I humble him; if he abases himself, I exalt him, and always I contradict him, until he comprehends that he is an incomprehensible monster." Then, but only then, could Pascal propose, or rather impose, the only solution which, according to him, was to throw light into this darkness: "Hearken unto God."

Thus does theology become, in Pascal's eyes, the center of all truths. His recourse to a supernatural light in order to acquaint men with their nature and destiny has in itself nothing extraordinary. It was a constant habit with the Fathers

of the Church, with Augustine, for instance, a favorite author among Pascal's friends, the Jansenists. The transition from philosophy to theology is also found in Malebranche, though in another sense, and something of the same kind has often occurred in the religious philosophy of Germany. But Augustine speaks as a bishop and in the name of faith; Malebranche rises by imperceptible degrees from the truths of reason to those of religion; while in Germany metaphysics and Protestant theology, as a rule, lend each other mutual support and exchange whatever enlightenment they may have. Pascal's way of proceeding is quite different, unlike any other, and singularly bold. Man's nature, he says in substance, being an insoluble enigma, Revelation alone gives us the key to it, and that through the dogma of the Fall and the Redemption. But in its turn this key is another enigma, no less incomprehensible than the first. For nothing can be more offensive to reason than that the sin of the first man should involve beings who, having been quite remote from that source, seem incapable of having shared in it. "What could be more contrary to our puny conceptions of justice than to damn for eternity a child without will of its own, for a sin committed six thousand years before its birth?" Nothing could shock us more than such a doctrine; and yet, but for that mystery, the most incomprehensible of all, we should be incomprehensible to ourselves. "Man is more inconceivable without that mystery than that mystery is inconceivable to man."

It is easy to understand why the defenders of the Christian belief who came after Pascal did not dare to follow his process of demonstration. They preferred more prudent courses. Pascal leaves us to choose between a mystery offensive to our reason and distasteful to our conscience, and the impossibility without the help of that mystery of understanding the nature of man. This is putting timorous souls into a state of terrible perplexity; and it is to be feared that most of them would come to a decision opposite to that assumed by Pascal as the most rational.

From Pascal's strenuous exertions to prove that we must admit a supernatural revelation, and that but for Jesus Christ man would be both helpless and incomprehensible, we can imagine what he thought of "natural religion." These two words, he asserted, clash painfully when coupled; one might as well deny religion outright as to speak of natural religion. Atheism and deism are two things almost equally detested by the Christian religion. If you maintain that you can know and serve God by the sole power of your reason, without any mediator, redemption then becomes superfluous. You then no longer believe that Christ came down upon earth to redeem us from the sin of Adam; you relapse into the blindness of heathenism; you are no longer a Christian.

Pascal therefore looks at the connection between reason and faith quite otherwise than Leibniz. He

cannot admit of any conformity between reason and faith whereby each, following a different path, arrives at the same common center—the possession of truth and the worship of God. Were it so, one of them might possibly be sufficient if the other were lacking: faith without reason with the vulgar, reason without faith in the philosopher. Such was perhaps the notion of Leibniz; it was surely that of many in the eighteenth century. Pascal looks upon such a thought as untenable and impious. To such a doctrine, which ignores the weakness of reason, one might justly oppose the arguments of the skeptics. Pyrrhonism will serve to correct this excessive presumptuousness, and to show that "reason confounds dogmatic philosophers." In fact, faith and reason do not converge to a common center. Reason reaches only to a certain point, which it cannot pass. Faith alone carries us beyond it. "We must be able to doubt when necessary, to be positive when necessary, and to submit when necessary;" and in still more explicit terms: "One should have the three following qualities: One should be a Pyrrhonian, a geometrician, and a submissive Christian." Now, there is nothing to prevent a deist from being a geometrician, but he is surely not a Pyrrhonian, and it is in vain for him to assert his respect for revealed religion; he is no longer a submissive Christian, for he can dispense with Christ.

Thence it follows that the proofs of the existence of God given by philosophers are in themselves far from sufficient. "I marvel," says Pascal, "at the

boldness with which these persons dare to speak of God when they address the impious." Prove divinity by the works of nature! Why, such a proof, even though the most accessible of all and the only one that can produce anything like a vivid impression upon souls, has no validity except for those who have already looked upon nature with the eyes of faith. To others it gives the impression that the proofs of religion are frail in the extreme, and nothing is more calculated to make them scorn it. As to the metaphysical arguments, properly so called, such as those given by Descartes, they are so complicated as to have little or no immediate efficacy; and granting they should prove effective with some people, their efficacy would last only so long as the demonstration was before them; an hour later the same people would be filled with misgivings lest they had been mistaken. In a word, without Jesus Christ these proofs are useless and barren.

The light of nature therefore reveals to us neither the existence of God, nor, still less, His nature. Should Pascal concede otherwise, he would undermine his own doctrine. Those who maintain that reason can rise unaided to a knowledge of the true God lay the way open to unbelief, whether intentionally or not, and are no less harmful to religion than her open enemies. This is one of the reasons why Pascal distrusted the philosophy of Descartes. He criticised it even for presuming to give a complete explanation of everything in the universe by the

working of natural laws alone. "God has spun the world into motion, after which we have nothing more to do with Him." No less strongly does Pascal object to the claim that one can give demonstrations of the existence of God and the spirituality of the soul as conclusive as those of geometry. But he refuses to pass criticism on these demonstrations. What would be the use of wasting his time thus? It would be sufficient, if necessary, to refer Descartes to Montaigne and the Pyrrhonian philosophers.

In the eyes of a man who has realized how foolish is the pride of our reason, and who acknowledges that the condition of man would be incomprehensible but for the dogma of the fall, reality presents itself in the shape of three distinct 'orders," overlying but not touching one another. In the lower "order," or sphere, lies the world of bodies; in the middle, the world of spirits; at the summit, the world of Christian love. From all bodies taken together one cannot produce even the smallest thought; it is impossible, for thought belongs to another sphere. From all bodies and spirits together one cannot extract the least manifestation of true love; it is impossible, for love belongs to another order, a *supernatural* order. Is not this "order of love" identical with the city of God, which figures in Leibniz under the name of "The Realm of Grace," and in Kant under that of "The Realm of Ends?" No doubt it is, but with one reservation, viz., that Leibniz and Kant arrived at

the result by efforts of pure reason, whereas Pascal reached it by the self-renunciation of reason. "The crowning act of reason is to acknowledge that a multitude of things are beyond its reach. It is weak, unless it reaches this conclusion. And if natural things are beyond its reach, what of supernatural things?" Therefore, no true love can exist without God's grace. Happy are those chosen by God to receive it! All that man can do is to try to make himself worthy of it; and even then his endeavors will be fruitless unless pleasing to God. Love Him, obey Him, pray to Him in order to obtain faith. God alone can put His divine truths into the soul, and in the way that pleases Him.

Pascal's method was that of persuasive demonstration, which he adopted after mature meditation, and from which he never swerved. The criticism of the dogmatic and Pyrrhonian doctrines, the picture of man's incomprehensible condition, of his grandeur and his misery, the examination of social ethics, the analysis of the proofs of Christianity, all tended to one object—namely, to showing that belief is rational, and that, if it knows its own nature, it finally submits to revelation. But the *Pensées* have been handed down to us in a fragmentary and unfinished form; and though one can restore the leading ideas and even the main lines of the plan followed and desired by the author, one can likewise regard the book as a simple collection of reflections and maxims without reference to their hidden links and

connections, and so emphasise only certain parts of them to the relative neglect of the others. This has been done, for instance, by those who, being chiefly impressed by what Pascal says of the weakness of human reason, have mistaken him for a skeptic. Thus, also, the *Pensées* have often been read for their own sake, without much regard for the end which Pascal wished them to serve. And thus it has happened also that their influence, which has been great, has not fulfilled the intentions of their author, and by this not unparalleled irony of fate the great apologist of the Christian religion has supplied its enemies with a whole arsenal of weapons.

His very theory of the reason, which he considers as impotent beyond certain limits, was in itself dangerous to the cause he wished to uphold. It was quite a different thing from Montaigne's skepticism. The latter was a means employed by Montaigne to combat fanaticism and the evils engendered by it; but it was only a means, and did not prevent Montaigne from preserving a certain number of moral convictions to which he was wedded; the arguments on which that skepticism was grounded had nothing original about them. Pascal's more profound genius raised the question of the legitimate use of human reason itself, and sought to fix its limits. On the one hand, he acknowledges the value of positive science (provided it admits the derived nature of its principles), and in this he is unlike the traditional and improbable skeptic invented by philosophers. But, on the other hand,

he affirms that "what goes beyond geometry is beyond our reach," and also that we know that science derives its principles from a superior domain, access to which is denied us. We are aware of the existence of the infinite, and ignorant of its nature, and we must be forever ignorant of it, since there is no common scale between us and the infinite. Pascal here opened the door to agnosticism, of which our century has beheld numerous and various forms. Now agnosticism may be, and often is, found associated with religious tendencies; but it may also be antagonistic to religion. At any rate, it is nowise connected especially with the Christian belief or the Roman Catholic dogma. History shows that the abandonment of rational metaphysics has not been beneficial to revealed religion.

Thus, as regards the relations between reason and faith, which interested Pascal so deeply, the result of his exertions ran diametrically counter to his purpose. When he says that the Christian dogma is a vain folly in the eyes of the world; that the original sin condemning thousands of guiltless beings to eternal damnation is revolting to our sense of justice, the philosophers of the eighteenth century are loud in approval. Many also approve when Pascal calls the philosophical proofs of the existence of God inadequate to convince hardened atheists. They readily grant that reason is one thing, that faith is another thing, and that there is no natural connection between the two. But when he thence infers that one must be a Christian, he is

no longer followed. His premises are retained and his conclusions dropped, to the great advantage of unbelief and of natural religion, which he detested almost equally.

It was next in the order of Pascal's method of demonstration to prove, as Montaigne had done, that man's reason is powerless to regulate his conduct, and that custom and prejudice alone regulate morals. He went about this proof with such earnestness and energy that even his friends were dismayed, and did not dare to publish this part of the *Pensées* without extenuating, in almost every sentence, the boldness of his thought and the harshness of his words. Yet there remained in it reflections on justice, on law, on property, on social distinctions and privileges, and even on sovereignty, the daring of which was not surpassed in the eighteenth century. Pascal concluded that all these social institutions are mere conventions, indefensible by reason. Not being able to make the just strong, men have made the strong just. These conventions, though not respectable in themselves, become so in the life of a Christian; so that the frame of the social order indirectly serves to prove the truth of Christianity, since on this truth the validity of the social order depends. But the philosophers of the eighteenth century neither were nor wished to be Christians; they merely gathered from Pascal's arguments that social institutions were a heap of rubbish, nonsense and injustice.

Lastly, admitting no other direct proofs of super-

natural religion than supernatural facts. Pascal grounds his faith on prophecies and miracles. "Were it not for miracles," he says, "I should not be a Christian." A dubious saying, because it was liable to be interpreted quite otherwise than Pascal intended. Pascal does not mean that if miracles appear incredible to a man he is thereby exempted from being a Christian. He means, on the contrary, that whoever has faith finds in miracles the means to explain his faith, to himself at least. He means to say that prophecies and miracles prove the truth of Christianity, and if the demonstration has no effect on certain minds, it is because God has willed them to remain blind. It is not because the demonstration is insufficient: it is because they are not in a fit state to receive it.

Still Pascal was here again opening a dangerous path. Hitherto the discussion of the outward proofs of Christianity had seldom extended beyond the world of theologians. Pascal was among the first to transfer it to the public realm of philosophers and men of letters. He was as poorly equipped for such a discussion as can be imagined, though it is true that very few men in his time were better prepared. The supposed divine nature of the sacred texts had prevented even the thought of a critical examination of them. But the adversaries of Christianity, although rather inexperienced in this style of criticism, soon felt that they might take advantage of the example set by Pascal. The part played in their controversy by the discussion of

prophecies and miracles is sufficiently well known. Voltaire was inexhaustible on the subject of sacred history. And we may question whether the scientific, disinterested and impartial exegesis which came later did not deal an even heavier blow than these gibes and taunts to the beliefs which Pascal would fain have strengthened!

Sometimes unwittingly, Pascal had thrown into all his writings, and especially into his *Pensées*, seeds which were to grow and bear fruit in the future. He undesignedly marked out for himself a place in the history of French philosophy. This cannot be asserted of certain other Christian thinkers who by their position in the church were more closely confined to tradition. Neither Bossuet nor Fénelon ever felt tempted to depart from it. Fénelon, indeed, entered upon a famous quarrel in defense of certain mystics, but the debate was only remotely connected with philosophy, and remained exclusively a theological one. If Fénelon, by his political schemes and by his partiality for social reforms, inaugurates the eighteenth century, it is after all from a statesman's point of view. When he tries to be a philosopher he is a follower of Descartes and the latter's enthusiastic disciple, and if he ceases to follow him, he occasionally goes astray. Thus, when he undertook to refute Spinoza, he opposed his doctrine by one far more akin to real Spinozism than the imaginary Spinozism which he was combatting.

As to Bossuet, he is admirably serene in his possession of truth. He therefore does not seek after what he has already received from a divine source. His philosophical works proper are important only as they show us one of the forms which have been assumed by the reconciliation of Cartesianism with the doctrine taught by the Church. His *Discours sur l'Histoire Universelle* shows both the extent of his mind and the limitations within which he moved; as, for example, when he saw in the history of the Jewish nation the clue to the destiny of mankind. But at the same time another wind was beginning to blow. One might already feel, with Fontenelle and Bayle, the advent of a new era, when all that had hitherto been considered as sacred would be submitted to criticism, and when an audacious philosophy would test the titles of the moral, social and religious inheritance handed down by the past.

CHAPTER IV.

BAYLE AND FONTENELLE.

THE philosophy of the eighteenth century in France, taken as a whole, presents so striking a contrast with that of the seventeenth century that the passage from the one to the other would be hardly intelligible did we not meet, as early as the end of the seventeenth century, with thinkers who, though of secondary rank, were yet bold and original, and who distinctly heralded the approaching change. In the seventeenth century speculative reason, having finally freed itself from scholasticism and the authority of the ancients, declared its absolute independence and made the freest use of it. It attempted a rational interpretation of the universe by intimately uniting metaphysics and physics and endeavored to realize the ideal of an intuitive and deductive science which should be to the totality of natural phenomena what mathematics is to numbers and figures. In religion it was independent in fact but respectful in form. With Descartes and Gassendi, it refrained from touching upon sacred subjects; with Malebranche and Leibniz it flattered itself upon having established the conformity of reason with faith. Political and social problems, at least in France, it carefully abstained from entering

upon — doubtless from caution, but also because it felt that it lacked the method for doing so practically.

The eighteenth century presents a very different aspect. It is here difficult to discover what the prevailing philosophy really is, for the precise reason that philosophy is everywhere—in tragedies, novels, history, political economy. Every one is more or less of a philosopher. Yet no one makes the least original effort to conceive the unity of the whole world of phenomena. Metaphysical problems are neglected, or at most are dealt with separately, without a thought of their mutual dependence and without any controlling idea to give them unity and to render the results harmonious. They are no longer attractive in themselves; the interest people seemingly take in them conceals an ulterior object. At the same time, the attitude of philosophers toward religion has totally changed. The majority, instead of seeking a peaceful compromise with revealed religion, assail it openly, many of them going so far as to attack natural religion, while they nearly all proclaim morals to be independent of religious dogma. Political, social and pedagogical problems become the chief objects of study with philosophers. As the Church had given undisputed solutions of these questions from time immemorial, the matter was, so to speak, a new one. People took to it eagerly. They were anxious to occupy this wide domain, which was but just opened, and rushed forward to take complete

and immediate possession of it. At the same time the influence of the natural sciences, which were progressing more slowly but more surely, increased as new discoveries were made and gradually prepared the way for a new form of philosophical speculation.

The principles of Descartes were, as we have seen, in great measure responsible for the formation of a philosophy so different from his own. Descartes himself sedulously avoided the discussion of political and social questions; but that his successors should have so applied the philosophy of "clear ideas," was inevitable. In the same way the precaution he had taken to "set apart" the truths of faith was not equivalent to a treaty of peace with theology, definitive and accepted on both sides. It was merely a truce, destined soon to be broken. The conflict was so inevitable that, even had theologians been perfectly reconciled to Cartesianism, the strife would nevertheless have broken out soon thereafter, by the natural development of philosophical thought alone. In fact, this is about what happened. If Cartesianism was looked upon suspiciously by Pascal, it did not alarm his friends at Port Royal: Arnauld and Nicole, in their *Logic*, showed themselves stanch Cartesians. Nor did the most illustrious of the leaders of the French Roman Catholic Church, Bossuet and Fénelon, conceal their sympathy for the philosophy of Descartes, being, as it seems, more desirous of finding Cartesianism consistent with the teaching of the

orthodox doctrine than of combating it in the name of the latter. It was from the ranks of the philosophers themselves that serious hostilities began. Pure Cartesians these opponents were not; but they followed, more boldly than Descartes himself, the way he had opened, and if they differed from him, it was chiefly in applying his method and principles at the very points where he had abstained from so doing.

On the other hand, there had been running throughout the seventeenth century a more or less hidden but uninterrupted undercurrent of opposition to the spiritualistic philosophy which was then predominant, and above all to Christian philosophy. Being Epicureans in spirit, taste, and often in morals, and unbelievers in matters of religion, the "libertines" were naturally drawn to doctrines which were in accordance with their tendencies. They welcomed the empiricism of Gassendi; they would readily have espoused materialism, had the latter openly declared itself, and the most intelligent among them were not long in foreseeing the advantage which the cause of unbelief would draw from the method and physics of Descartes. All this, however, was not worked out, made clear and openly presented to the public. To find the real precursors of the philosophy of the eighteenth century, we must go to the last quarter of the seventeenth. There appeared at that time two minds quite different from each other in all things save one: that they both sowed many seeds which were

soon to bear fruit. These men were Bayle and Fontenelle.

If by "philosopher" we understand a man whose ideas concerning the great metaphysical problems form a definite system, Bayle must be refused that name, for he pleads the natural weakness of the human mind, and takes refuge in a modest kind of scepticism. He should rather be called a scholar, a commentator on the ancients, a historian of theological controversies, and, above all, a critic of current events. Nothing interests and diverts him more than the *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*. He was born a Protestant, was converted to Roman Catholicism, but almost immediately after returned to Protestantism, on which account he could not live in France, and finally fixed his residence in Rotterdam, that city from which were to come in the eighteenth century so many bold books and pamphlets. He was not a daring man, at least in no respect did he appear so. His aspect was rather that of a person of the sixteenth century than of one of the eighteenth. He published large folios full of learned discussions, and loved to point out and correct the mistakes of other scholars whose works nobody read. He liked not only history, but the crumbs of history, half buried in the dust of dictionaries. Such a universal and voracious curiosity cannot but seem harmless; and if peradventure a bold expression here and there causes the reader to prick up his ears he is soon reassured. It

required a keen insight to discover amid such inexhaustible and minute erudition constantly preoccupied with almost forgotten things, an engine of war destructive of nearly all that the seventeenth century held certain and sacred. Nevertheless that engine was there, or at least it came from that source. And Voltaire had good reason for eulogizing the immortal Bayle as "the pride of the human species."

One neither can nor ought to give a systematic account of ideas which their own author explicitly refused to unite into a system. But Bayle's ideas, though not closely linked together, are yet coherent. They center about certain leading points to which Bayle always reverts even when we least expect him to do so; and these points themselves have as a common center the relation between revelation and reason, with all the consequences which the solution of that question involves.

Bayle boldly asserts at times that it is impossible to avoid the clear conclusions of reason. For there is, he declares, a distinct and vivid light which shines upon all men the moment they open the eyes of their attention; it is God Himself, the essential and substantial Truth, who then enlightens them directly. It is in vain for one to try to deny this light. There are axioms which we cannot question, however hard we may try. We cannot believe that the whole is not greater than the part. Even though the opposite statement should be cited in Scripture a hundred times, man, being what he

is, would not believe it. Therefore let nobody say that theology is a queen to which philosophy is a serving-maid merely; for the theologians themselves by their very behavior confess that philosophy is the queen and theology the servant. Hence the exertions and contortions which they inflict upon their minds to avoid being accused of a conflict with genuine philosophy. They would certainly not exert themselves so much if they did not tacitly admit that the authority of any dogma not confirmed, examined and recorded in the supreme parliament of reason and natural light is "wavering and fragile as glass."

Had Bayle always spoken thus he would have not only presaged but forestalled the eighteenth century. But then he would have shocked the great majority of his contemporaries. Condemned as irreligious and impious, he would have been far less read, and his influence would have been infinitely more restricted. He usually speaks a much more cautious language. Not only is he a believer, but he repudiates utterly the accusation of heresy. He objects to being classed with the Socinians, who refuse to believe in the Trinity and the Incarnation as contrary to natural light.

He goes even further. In case of a conflict between revelation and reason, the latter must yield. For could reason lead us to a knowledge of truth, evidence would be our guide. Now there are things entirely evident which a Christian rejects as false. Thus, says Bayle, you reject the axiom

of identity in accepting the Trinity, the Eucharist and Transubstantiation. Certain very evident propositions were unhesitatingly accepted as true by those who lived before the Gospel; but the mysteries of our theology have shown that these propositions, in spite of their evidence, are false. Let us profit by this lesson, and, in order not to fall into errors like those of the heathen, and thus less excusable, let us hold nothing as certainly true, save what is taught by Scripture.

But let us notice the very special motives which Bayle gives for this attitude, apparently so submissive. Let us hear him speak successively to philosophers and theologians. "Do not try to understand mysteries," he says to the former; "if you could understand them they would be mysteries no longer. Do not even try to lessen their apparent absurdity. Your reason here is utterly powerless; and who knows but that absurdity may be an essential ingredient of mystery? Believe as Christians; but as philosophers, abstain." And, turning to theologians: "You are quite right in demanding that we should believe; but make this demand in the name of authority only, and do not be so imprudent as to try to justify your belief in the eyes of reason. God has willed it so, God has done so; therefore it is good and true, wisely done and wisely permitted. Do not venture any further. If you enter into detailed reasons for all this you will never see the end of it, and, after a thousand disputes, you will be compelled to fall back upon your original rea-

son, authority. In this matter, the best use to make of reason is not to reason. Moreover, if you consent to discuss the point, you will be beaten. You wish that truth—that is, revelation—should always have the best reasons on its side. You wish this to be so, and you imagine it to be so. What a gross mistake! How could a theologian's answers regarding mysteries, which are superior to reason, be as clear as a philosopher's objections? From the very fact that a dogma is mysterious and utterly incomprehensible to weak human understanding, it inevitably follows that our reason will combat it with very strong arguments, and can find no other satisfactory solution than the authority of God.

"This is precisely what theologians do not often admit. Because I think the reasons they give in favor of the dogma are weak, they conclude that I do not believe in the dogma. I should not believe, indeed, if God had not bidden me to do so; but He commands and I submit. But He does not bid me regard demonstrations as sound when they are not. Theologians must choose: either they must affirm their dogmas in the name of a supernatural light, without discussion; or, if they discuss them, they must not assume that they have a monopoly of the truth. But they nearly always adopt a third method: they choose to discuss, and claim to be right beforehand. If any one candidly and in good faith points out the strength of the contrary opinion, they hate and suspect him. In-

deed, even theologians themselves hesitate to state the strongest arguments urged against them, lest these should produce too forcible an impression upon the reader. These arguments they conceal out of charity and zeal for truth. Was not Cardinal Bellarmin reproached for his candid statement of the arguments urged by heretics, on the ground that it was prejudicial to the cause of religion?"

If, therefore, a theologian desires to act prudently, while remaining sincere, he must abstain from entering upon discussion in which he is sure to be beaten. He must present mysteries as they are—that is, as incomprehensible and absurd. The Christian will nevertheless believe in them, since they were revealed by God Himself. It is his sole reason for believing in them: but fortunately this reason is indisputable. One does not raise objections against God.

Yet Bayle did raise objections; and the strictures which he offered upon Providence elicited, as everybody knows, the *Théodicée* of Leibniz. According to Bayle, if we look upon things in a human way—i. e., from the point of view of mere reason, the advocates of Providence find it difficult to prove that everything in the universe is the work of Providence, and equally difficult to defend themselves against the Manicheans, who maintain that a principle of good and a principle of evil are continually at strife in the universe, and that neither is able to triumph over the other. No doubt, as God

is all-powerful and all-bounteous, His work cannot fail to be the best possible, and we thence naturally infer the existence of Providence. But does experience confirm this reasoning? It does not; we see that man is wicked and miserable. Was the Creator unable or unwilling to make him otherwise? In either case it is very difficult to defend Providence. Were there nowadays, says Bayle, Marcionites as skilled in disputation as are either the Jesuits or the Jansenists, they would not have advanced three syllogisms ere they had compelled their adversary to confess that he did not understand his own assertions, and that here we come to the verge of the unfathomable abyss of the sovereignty of the Creator, in which our reason is lost, there remaining nothing but faith to uphold us. A pagan philosopher would have here an advantage over the Christian.

It is evident that evil should be prevented, if possible. Now God does not prevent all the disorders in the world, and yet it was most easy for Him to do so. It is also evident that a non-existent creature cannot be an accomplice in an evil deed, and that he ought not in justice to be punished therefor. And yet, does not God allow all men to suffer the consequences of the original sin? Can this sin justify all the sufferings in the world? The conclusion is: Believe in Revelation. "Revelation is the only storehouse from which arguments can be produced against such people; by it alone can we refute the alleged eternity of the evil principle."

Leibniz had much ado to refute Bayle's objections. He shows indeed that the hypothesis of the Manicheans is shallow and that nothing is easier and shallower than to postulate a special principle in order to explain facts which puzzle us. But Bayle is perfectly willing to grant him this. Does Leibniz in his turn succeed in proving man's liberty and in vindicating Providence? Hardly. The liberty which Leibniz concedes to man is a form of determinism merely; and his proposed explanation of the existence of evil in the universe, perhaps the least unsatisfactory that could be given, has but one fault; but the fault is a sèrious one. It forces its readers into pessimism. If this world be indeed the best of all possible worlds, *Candide* is not wrong in thinking it bad. We must therefore agree with Bayle that Revelation is our only resource here, and that reason, pure and simple, does not bear out the same conclusion.

But, one might object, the origin of evil, the cause of sin, and the relation of God to the world, are purely speculative questions, raised only by metaphysicians; and if reason finds it no easy thing to agree with Revelation on these points, it has quite as much difficulty in agreeing with itself when thrown on its own resources. Human reason, says Bayle, is a principle of destruction and not of edification; it is fitted only for raising doubts and for evasions. It therefore matters little if on problems which are beyond its reach it runs counter to Revelation. At least we see clearly that the two

agree on questions connected with practical life, that faith engenders virtue, and that religion sanctions the supreme rule of conduct. Here no difficulties or objections appear.

True, says Bayle, but on one condition: religion must teach nothing contrary to morals. To be sure, it is unlikely to do so; yet sometimes it does. Indeed, have we not heard Fathers of the Church declaring, and contemporary priests repeating after them, that compulsion should be used to bring refractory people to the orthodox faith? Hence sprang the persecutions against heretics, the dragonades; hence the Protestants were hunted, pillaged, imprisoned, sent to the galleys, their children kidnaped, and their clergymen hanged; hence all the other methods of violent conversion set in motion when the Edict of Nantes was revoked. Now, not only are these proceedings absurd and even prejudicial to their own end; not only are these persecutions cruel and abominable, but the maxim that justifies them is based on a wrong principle. God cannot have said "*Compelle intrare.*" Just as there is no right against right, there is no Revelation against Revelation. Now, in moral matters, the first revelation is that of the conscience, "the true light which lighteth every man which cometh into the world."

Bayle is here decidedly more affirmative than usual, and the cause is evidently the indignation he feels at the sight of persecutions. "If anybody presumes to assert that God has revealed to us a moral

maxim in direct opposition to the first principles of all morals, we must deny the assertion, and maintain that such a person is misinterpreting the text and that one ought rather to reject the testimony of one's criticism and grammar than that of one's reason." God cannot contradict Himself. If the Scripture does not agree with our conscience, it is because we misunderstand the Scripture. And whatever contests may arise, conscience must always have the last word. For instance, it tells us that honest ignorance is guiltless, and that a man cannot be responsible for a fault which he commits, without knowing that he commits it. We cannot, therefore, believe that a heretic or even an infidel, if he is sincere, can be punished by God for anything but for evil deeds which he may have done while knowing them to be evil. As for the deeds he may have done with a clear conscience—I mean a conscience which he has not himself maliciously blinded—I cannot be persuaded that they are crimes.

Likewise the stories in the Bible are not always edifying. If they shock my conscience, shall I abstain from condemning them? Because David, for instance, partook of God's inspiration, shall I any the less regard him as a murderer, an ingrate, an adulterer? If the Scripture, in relating a deed, blames or praises it, nobody is at liberty to appeal from its judgment; we must all make our praise and blame conform to the pattern of the Scripture. But if the Holy Ghost has not characterized it we

must not hesitate to censure what we think is a crime. There is no middle path; either these actions are bad, or actions like them are not wrong. Of these alternatives, our conscience can accept only the first.

Further, coming to the essence of the question, religious faith does not seem to have any influence whatever upon men's conduct. We have only to look about us. If we examine the morals of Christians, their lewd deeds, their slanders, their tricks, and all that they do in order to procure money, or to obtain offices, or to supplant competitors, we shall find that they could hardly be more licentious even if they did not believe in immortality. We shall find, as a rule, that they abstain only from such deeds as would expose them to infamy, or to the gallows, two checks which might restrain the corruption of a godless man as easily as theirs. A great many rogues and scoundrels believe in the immortality of the soul, whereas many godly and righteous men do not. Soldiers may be irreproachable in their faith, and yet indulge in all sorts of excesses. This is also seen in some women. There is nothing inexplicable about it. It is not the general opinions of the mind which determine our actions: it is the present passions of the heart; and, as the English psychologists of the nineteenth century very rightly say, "*cognition does not produce action.*" Thus (always excepting those who are led by God's spirit), the faith a man has in a religion is no guaranty for his conduct. On the con-

trary, it is often quite apt to rouse in his soul anger against those who think differently, fear, and a kind of zeal for devotional ceremonies, in the hope that these outward actions and a public confession of the true faith will screen his disorderly life and gain pardon for it some day.

Thence arise momentous consequences, as Bayle very successfully maintains. If believing in certain dogmas has no necessary influence on the conduct of man, we may truly say that morals are independent of that belief. If Christians who are "irreproachable as regards faith" lead an evil life, we must needs infer that righteous conduct is not inseparable from orthodoxy. We may therefore imagine a state composed of men believing neither in the existence of God nor in an after-life. Were they, however, zealous in caring for the public good, in repressing malefactors, in preventing quarrels, in upholding the rights of widows and orphans, in encouraging fairness in business, who can doubt but such a state would be a highly civilized one? Throughout the eighteenth century this hypothesis of a "society of atheists" proposed by Bayle is discussed, and though some, as Voltaire for instance, were annoyed by it, it still remains for many others a sort of ideal.

Recapitulating Bayle's views of the mysteries of religion and of belief in the supernatural, it appears that from the point of view of knowledge such mysteries are offensive to reason and seem absurd; from the point of view of morals, they do not make

man any better, and are, to say the least, useless. What is to be inferred from this? That we may dispense with the belief in the supernatural and with mysteries; that we must seek what is good and true by human reason alone? Far from it. Bayle's conclusion is the very opposite of this. Behold, he says in substance, the weakness and helplessness of human reason! If God did not teach us the truth, would our reason bring us to it? Reason is very far from it, and is ignorant of the ways that lead to it. Therefore, how much gratitude do we owe to Divine Goodness, which has especially revealed to us through the Scripture what we should never have discovered by ourselves and what would even seem to us absurd and unacceptable were it not corroborated in this way!

One cannot carry submissiveness farther. How can a man be suspected of impiety who does not hesitate a moment to silence reason when Revelation speaks? Still we may question whether this submission is without reserve, whether this respectfulness comes from the heart or only from the lips. If he is sincere why does not Bayle, after the example of Malebranche, seek to make the inward revelation, which is conscience, agree with the outward revelation, which is the Scripture? Why does he purposely insist on the impossibility of making acceptable to reason what religion commands us to believe? And if insincere, his language becomes a dreadful irony. In this case Bayle's defense of religion looks like a deliberate,

organized attack upon it; when he speaks of the "weakness and helplessness of reason," he really means the incomprehensibility and absurdity of revelation. In a word, with a show of deep respect, he patiently destroys one after another all the reasons for believing in the dogmas of religion. When he has finished, revealed religion can no longer hold its own; it is on the verge of ruin.

Therefore the works of Bayle, particularly his *Dictionary*, were an inexhaustible store for the unbelievers of the eighteenth century. To take but one instance among a thousand, this is the way he foreshadows those who took advantage of the defects in the sacred texts. "Were such an account to be found in Thucydides or Livy, all critics would unanimously conclude that the copyists had transposed the pages, forgotten something in one place, repeated something in another, or inserted spurious passages amidst the work of the author. But we must beware of such suspicions when the Bible is in question. Nevertheless, there have been persons bold enough to maintain that not all the chapters or verses in the First Book of Samuel occupy the place they originally had." Suffer this cautious remark to pass and all of modern Biblical exegesis follows.

It accordingly matters little that Bayle is incapable of systematic thought; that he appears now as a Cartesian and now as a Pyrrhonian; that at one time evidence dispels his doubt and that again his doubt attacks all evidence; and that he actually

seems to take pleasure in these contradictions. The eddies do not prevent us from perceiving clearly the direction of the stream. Bayle is bent on nothing less than breaking up the system of belief and principles commonly accepted by his predecessors and contemporaries, the system of "Christian rationalism." Bayle shows that a choice is imperative: either one must be a rationalist and cease to be a Christian; or be a Christian, and forego reason altogether. Scriptural texts had been relied on; Bayle gives us to understand that these texts are not proof against criticism. Religion had been looked upon as the basis of morals; Bayle proves that morals depend solely upon the conscience, and that religion, even genuine religion, has no influence whatever upon men's conduct. It was thought—at least in France—that royalty was of divine right; but, says Bayle, "if we do not more often see kings dethroned, it is because the nations have not been worked upon by clever enough intrigues." We might make the enumeration longer, for the established opinions and hereditary privileges that Bayle questioned were not few. No one, indeed, was to go further than this precursor of Rationalism. And even in our days his conception of morals as independent of religion and metaphysics seems to many people dangerously bold.

Between Bayle and Fontenelle there is the greatest conceivable difference, and this difference is noticeable even in their fortunes and modes of

life. Attentive only to his work and heedless of everything else, in Rotterdam Bayle endured with fortitude both poverty and the insulting attacks of his enemies. Fontenelle, a provincial wit craving for literary success in Paris, fairly "elbowed his way" into the world, and rose to a dominant position in the academies. Bayle knew almost everything that could be learned from the books of the past, and on this vast material he exerted his indefatigable and subtle powers of dialectic. Fontenelle looked almost with disdain upon the rubbish of erudition, but, on the other hand, he was a mathematician. He had a taste for the exact sciences; he had reflected upon them, and had a clear presentiment of what they were very soon to become. Thus the work of the one completes in some sort the work of the other.

Fontenelle is a Cartesian, but an independent one, who does not regard himself bound to adhere to all the doctrines of Descartes. Thus we shall see that he rejects the doctrine of the automatism of animals, and also that he deems the Cartesian system of metaphysics untenable. But he follows Descartes implicitly in his conception of method and of science, which above all require clearness, as well as in the part which he assigns to mathematics. "What is true is simple and clear; and when our way of arriving at the truth is intricate and confused, we may say the way leads to the truth, but that it is nevertheless not the true way." The right method requires that

we begin with principles and that the consequences spring directly from them. Fontenelle therefore looks upon mathematics as "the universal instrument." This instrument cannot be made too far-reaching or too flexible. Mechanics, optics, acoustics, in short, all the sciences which reveal definite relations between measurable quantities are advanced farther and more surely according as the art of discovering relations in general grows more perfect.

This is exactly the spirit of the Cartesian method, and therefore it is not surprising that Fontenelle should also have declared for that conception of the universe upheld by the disciples of Descartes. We do not belittle the universe, he says, when we maintain that it is on a large scale what a watch is in miniature. On the contrary, it is beautiful to contemplate that the order of nature, marvelous as it is, rests on such simple principles. Everything in it takes place according to the laws of mechanics and geometry; and as to matters in physics which cannot be brought to such a degree of clearness—for instance the fermentation of liquors, the diseases of animals, etc.,—it is not that geometry does not dominate them, but that it there becomes obscure and almost impenetrable on account of the too great complexity of the figures.

All his life Fontenelle adhered to that corpuscular philosophy which admits clear ideas of *figures* and *motions* only. If we reject this philosophy, we shall fall into thoughts which may be ever so plaus-

ible, noble, or brilliant, but which will not fail to be wanting in clearness. This was an evident allusion to the system of Newton. The Newtonian system is essentially based upon "attraction," which is "a very obscure and questionable principle;" whereas the Cartesian system is based on purely mechanical principles, which are acknowledged by everybody. While to the last giving full credit to the mathematical genius of Newton, Fontenelle maintains against him the Cartesian hypothesis of vortices.

And indeed he had been indebted to this hypothesis for the great success of his youth. His *Entretiens sur la Pluralité des Mondes* had made the meaning of this hypothesis accessible to society men and even to women; it was a work of elegant popularization, in which Fontenelle's faults were no less useful to him than his excellences.

On the other hand, Fontenelle ignores Descartes's metaphysics, which he knows but slightly and does not care to understand better. Not that he prefers any other system of metaphysics: it is metaphysics itself which seems to him of little importance. He already speaks of it as many scientific men did afterward, with an indifference half politeness, half contempt; as if metaphysicians were a species of ingenious and inoffensive artists who took delight in constructing more or less plausible systems, but could not claim to be earnest seekers of truth. Fontenelle compares metaphysicians to historians, which with him is equivalent to placing

them as far as possible from the mathematician or physicist—that is, from the real man of science. "Tacitus and Descartes," he says, "I take to be two great inventors of systems of very different kinds, equally bold, of equally lofty and fruitful genius, and by these very tokens equally liable to error." Soon after this, we find Voltaire calling the philosophy of Descartes a "romance," and criticising him for his excess of imagination. Furthermore Fontenelle himself says, as Voltaire does afterward, that Descartes proved by his own example the uselessness of metaphysical research. "Should the systems of Descartes and of Leibniz both sink under hostile objections, it would be necessary for philosophers — and a very painful necessity for them — to cease puzzling over the union of the soul with the body. The example of Descartes and Leibniz both would justify them in seeking the secret no longer."

But there remains one metaphysical problem in which Fontenelle does not cease to take an interest; it is that of the existence of God, to which he recurs on several occasions. And here again he is less a follower of Descartes than a precursor of Voltaire. He rejects metaphysical proofs as too subtle. He proposes a different mode of demonstration, which he thinks is new, and which is taken from the origin of animal species; in general, we may say, he endeavors to prove the existence of God by the consideration of nature. "True physics," he says, "rises to the point of becoming

a sort of theology." Is this merely a formal phrase, a canopy to hide his wares, or one of those popular opinions "which must be treated tenderly and considerately?" It is difficult to decide. Nothing proves Fontenelle to have been insincere on this point. As he accepts literally the comparison of the universe to a watch, it is but natural that the comparison of God to a supreme watchmaker should satisfy him. "This great work," he says, "which grows more wonderful as it becomes better known, gives us an exceedingly lofty idea of Him who *wrought* it." A perfectly clear representation of the physical universe here leads Fontenelle to a representation, likewise perfectly clear but rather puerile and superficial, of the relation between God and the world. It is, so to speak, the price of clearness, in a subject which does not admit of it. But the successors of Fontenelle in the eighteenth century are not conscious of this drawback, and most of them prefer Fontenelle's conception of Divinity to the incomparably deeper and finer one which they might have found in Descartes or Spinoza.

As in his successors, there is noticeable in Fontenelle also a covert spite against the priesthood, and a tendency to explain positive religions by stupidity, ignorance, error, a childish taste for the marvelous and man's natural imbecility, exploited by his shrewder fellows. "Wholesome philosophy," by spreading light, baffles these clever folks and dispels superstition. Fontenelle, indeed, does

not openly attack the Christian religion. In his *Histoire des Oracles* he assails only the pagan priests. In this work he summarizes a ponderous Latin book, written by a Dutchman, who seeks to prove that oracles were never inspired by demons, and that they disappeared, as they had arisen, solely as the result of natural causes.

But what motives had Fontenelle or his readers to feel interested in the disappearance of oracles that had already been silent for more than fifteen centuries? Instead of "oracles" read "miracles," and the work of Fontenelle will at once have a modern meaning, and at the same time seem singularly aggressive. We understand, then, what he means when he explains that a belief in "oracles" must be attributed to the taste of men for the supernatural, and to the cravings of an imagination not yet regulated by reason; or when he says that supernatural phenomena cease to be produced as soon as there are witnesses of a somewhat critical turn of mind. "When oracles began to appear in the world, philosophy, fortunately for them, had not yet appeared." Fontenelle dwells at length upon the impostures and artifices of priests. Everything centered about them, and had any one dared to breathe a word against them he would have been cried down as an atheist and a blasphemer. "The priests in the temples repudiated kinship with the mountebanks in the streets because they were themselves mountebanks of a nobler and more serious stripe — which makes a great difference in that

trade." Notice, pray, the tone of scorn and hatred in these words; it will often resound again in the eighteenth century. It is true, I repeat, that Fontenelle is speaking here only of pagan priests. But as he observes in the same work, that by feigning to maintain a thing one insinuates the contrary as cunningly as one can, "because of the regard one must needs have for popular opinion," it is hardly possible to misapprehend his intentions.

Fontenelle has not by any means a historical turn of mind. But, unlike the pure Cartesians, who neglected history outright, he devoted much attention to it; and in his reflections on this subject two contrary tendencies counterbalance each other, both of which we shall meet again in the course of the century. Sometimes he considers man as being always and everywhere identical in his essence, and when this abstract idea of humanity is uppermost historical events are to him but of secondary interest and serve only to confirm what he infers from his general conception. At others, induced by physics and incipient physiology to take into account the great complexity of the facts of reality, and thus put on his guard against systems, he evinces curiosity concerning primitive and savage humanity, and foresees the possibility of comparative ethnography, of scientific anthropology, and finally of extending to sociology the method of the natural sciences. These two tendencies do not express themselves clearly enough in his mind to be antag-

onistic; rather they co-exist. They mingle together as best they can, and express themselves by indications as yet uncertain, but bound to develop in the future.

The first of these tendencies shows itself in a very curious way in Fontenelle's idea of constructing history *a priori*. "A man of great skill," he says, "simply by considering human nature, might guess all past and future history, without ever having heard of a single event. Such a man would say: 'Human nature is composed of ignorance, credulity and vanity, . . . here and there a little kindness, etc.' He would call up before his mind the details of a multitude of facts which either have actually happened, or are quite similar to facts that have happened. This method of learning history would assuredly not be a bad one; one would be at the fountain-head of things, and would thence, as a mere diversion, behold the consequences which had been foreseen."

That such a treatment of the subject is impracticable, Fontenelle is very well aware; yet he mentions it more than half seriously, and rather as an ideal than as a jest. He seems to take no account of the widely different conditions in which the development of the various nations really takes place; the surface of the globe is simply conceived in an abstract way as so much space inhabited by a homogeneous population called mankind. Wherefore this paradox? Because only in this way can history approximate the form of a science as con-

ceived by Descartes, and become what was afterward called sociology. All real sciences imply a prophecy of the future, based on the analysis of present reality. And if sociology ever becomes a science, it will enable us in some measure to foresee the future and so to prepare for it. Fontenelle had a distinct vision of that sociology, and he was aware that it depended on a knowledge of the laws which govern the progress of the human mind. He holds that we ought to study the process by which tastes, customs and opinions succeed one another in the minds of men, and above all the law which governs the process, for in most cases it is not by mere chance that one taste succeeds another; there is generally a necessary, though hidden, link. "One would then conceive a history of the human mind as a succession of thoughts which spring up among the nations one after another, or rather, one from another, the concatenation of which, being duly observed, might give rise to some sort of prophecy."

This was in the days of Fontenelle quite a new idea, and it was destined to be a fruitful one. It led Fontenelle to wonderfully correct views of mythology, the profundity of which has been noted by Mr. Andrew Lang in his recent book, *Myths, Cults and Religions*. Fontenelle observed the childish and crude character of Greek myths, and found that they did not differ in this from those which are to be met with in the infancy of all other nations. He concluded that they were a spontaneous production of ignorant and untutored imaginations,

and that in order to explain them there was no need to have recourse to anything else than the simple elements of human nature. "We can hardly realize nowadays the state of ignorance and barbarism of the primeval times. Let us picture to ourselves the Kaffirs, the Laplanders, the Iroquois, and let us remember at the same time that these peoples, being already ancient, must have attained to a certain degree of knowledge and cultivation which were wanting in men of the earliest ages." Consequently, when we are shocked by the revolting immorality of these fables, it is preposterous to seek for a moral interpretation of them, or, when struck by their childish absurdity, to suppose therein any primitive symbolical explanation of certain natural phenomena. We must not attribute to the authors of these fables our own habits of thought; on the contrary, we must go back, if we can, to the intellectual state which gave rise to them, and which humanity everywhere went through as a necessary state of its evolution. Thus can we explain "the wonderful similitude between the fables of the Greeks and those of the primitive Americans." Men of all countries have pictured to themselves the Unknown under the shape of what was known to them, and represented beings more powerful than themselves, yet like themselves. As man becomes civilized, his gods become less brutal and shocking. This philosophy of the earliest ages had, then, its foundation in human nature itself. "It is not science," Fontenelle concludes, "to fill our heads full

of the extravagant beliefs of the Phœnicians and Greeks, but it is science to know what led the Phœnicians and Greeks to these extravagant beliefs." True; but to establish comparative mythology we must have an exact knowledge of the different series of myths. Too often did the French philosophers of the eighteenth century see what was to be done, and fail to do it because they hastily tried to interpret before they were in full possession of what was to be interpreted.

Fontenelle was thus quite prepared by his habitual turn of thought to intervene in the famous contention between the ancients and the moderns, which broke out at the end of the seventeenth century. The comparative merits of Homer, Pindar, Sophocles, Corneille, Racine, Molière, etc., were then generally discussed from a purely literary point of view. Fontenelle deals with the question as a philosopher and sociologist. He inquires whether there has been any progress since ancient times, and how progress is to be understood. Like Pascal, he compares the succession of men of all times to a single man living forever and learning continually. This man was a child when he was busied only with the more pressing needs of life; and a youth when his imagination principally was exercised. He has now attained to manhood when he has more reasoning power. But the comparison here comes to an end, for this symbolical man would have no old age. Progress will be unlimited.

Fontenelle makes use of two principles to solve

the question of the ancients and moderns, at least as regards the sciences.

In the first place, he lays down the doctrine of *the natural equality of minds*. We have seen that, according to Fontenelle, humanity always remains uniform in its essence. Centuries, therefore, cause no natural differences between men. The climate of Greece or Italy and that of France are too similar to cause any obvious differences between the Greeks and Latins and the French. And should they give rise to differences, these would be easily canceled and would not be more to their advantage than to ours. We are, then, perfectly equal, be we ancients or moderns, Greek or French. But may not nature favor certain centuries by producing in them a greater number of superior men? This is unlikely. There might be at most some imperceptible inequality; but the general order of nature seems to be quite constant. The oaks and poplar trees in our fields are like to those which stood there in the olden times. It is not otherwise with mankind.

The difference, therefore, proceeds only from the *necessary succession of discoveries*. The ancients could not do more in their time. They did what our best minds would have done in their place, and, were they in ours, it is probable that they would have the same views as we have; for there is a necessary order which regulates our progress. Every stage of knowledge is developed only after a certain range of preceding knowledge has been attained, and when its turn has come. Fortunately

this law was for a long time ignored. Men conceived unreasonable hopes, which encouraged them to work. Chemistry would not have existed but for alchemy; and should we possess the discoveries made by the alchemists if they had not fancied they would succeed in making gold? "Men must have an imaginary goal to allure them. But now the sciences are in a fair way to succeed, and when we behold the progress they have made during the last century, in spite of prejudices, obstacles and the small number of scientific men, we might almost be tempted to let our hopes for the future rise too high. We shall see new sciences springing out of nothingness, while ours are still in the cradle." On the subject of the future of science the cold mind of Fontenelle is kindled almost to enthusiasm. He even goes so far as to say in the eulogy of a mathematician, that "with good logic and good medicine men would need nothing more."

Therefore August Comte, who adopted several of these ideas into his system, was not wrong in looking upon Fontenelle as a precursor of modern times. True, his mind, though most lucid, was lacking in extent and power. He was incapable of even a moderate degree of synthesis. He could produce nothing beyond pamphlets and fragments. We may expect of him only views of details. But these views are sometimes strangely strong, bold and deep. It is not to be denied that Fontenelle was among the first who had a distinct notion of scientific progress and of the intellectual development of mankind under fixed laws.

CHAPTER V.

MONTESQUIEU.

The eighteenth century in France, at least as regards philosophy, may be divided distinctly in the middle. It was about 1750 that Rousseau, Diderot, Buffon and Condillac began to produce their chief works. It was in 1751 that D'Alembert published the preliminary discourse to the *Encyclopædia*. Voltaire covers nearly the whole of the century. But Montesquieu belongs only to the first half. He was born in 1689, and saw the end of the reign of Louis XIV. The *Lettres Persanes* appeared under the Regency, and are full of allusions to the king, who had just passed away. Montesquieu's last and most important work, *L'Esprit des Lois*, dates from 1748. He died in 1755.

Accordingly, Montesquieu exercised an influence upon the other "philosophers" of the age without feeling theirs, especially as he spent the latter years of his life almost uninterruptedly in his mansion at La Brède. Paris, though loved in his youth, then palled upon him, and his visits there were but brief. He thus ceased to be in direct contact with his fellow-writers, a fact which he does not seem to have very much regretted. To tell the truth, he

always occupied a distinct and separate place in the literary world. In those days a man of letters was usually a poor devil who scribbled for bread and aspired to a pension, and whose language on some subjects too often reflected his obligations, his hopes, or his disappointments. Voltaire, who early comprehended the necessity of being independent, succeeded in this by acquiring wealth; but that wealth came rather late, and the period which preceded was not without troubles and bitterness. Montesquieu, on the contrary, was exempted from the two-fold struggle for existence and for position. He belonged to an honorable family of magistrates. He was heir to one of his uncles, who bequeathed to him, together with his name, his judicial office in Bordeaux. He made money on his vineyards, and left to his children a fortune which had prospered in his hands.

The personal circumstances of Montesquieu had their significance. Bold assertions, which would have seemed more offensive in the mouth of a man not so "well-to-do," were more easily tolerated coming from him. He uttered them in a calmer tone, with more gravity and moderation. Even after he had sold his office, the fact of having been a magistrate left him some authority. When he expresses the opinion that a reform of the penal law or of criminal jurisprudence would be desirable, it is quite another thing than if the reform were demanded by an "unqualified individual" who ran the risk of being sent to the Bastille if his ideas offended a

minister of state. There is, however, another side to the picture: Class-prejudices are evident in Montesquieu. He supports the privileges of the nobility, and endeavors to defend the sale of judicial offices. But he was, for all that, liberal-minded, devoted to the public good, and desirous of advancing his contemporaries towards justice and humanity.

The *Lettres Persanes* undoubtedly owed much of their swift and brilliant success to their vivacious style and pungent satire, as well as to their description of scenes of harem life; but at the same time they foretell the author of *L'Esprit des Lois*. Reflections on the nature and principles of government, on the foundations of society and on natural justice, on the law of nations, on Roman policy, on the English constitution, and on penal laws, are all cunningly introduced into the *Lettres Persanes*. If we read them over after *L'Esprit des Lois* we seem better able to see through the complex and rather secretive nature of Montesquieu, who never quite reveals himself. Voltaire, who had no sympathy with him, and yet devoted considerable attention to him, not kindly but discerningly, characterizes Montesquieu as a statesman, a philosopher, a wit and a citizen. The philosopher, the statesman, the citizen already show themselves in the *Lettres Persanes;* the wit also appears in *L'Esprit des Lois*, though he occupies there a subordinate place.

It took Montesquieu twenty years to work out the plan and gather the materials of what he calls

his masterpiece. He prepared himself for it by wide and varied reading, which became more fruitful as he grew surer of what he wished to do. He traveled over a great part of Europe, made a long stay in Italy, and a longer one in England. He undoubtedly did not derive from these travels all the profit one might expect. The account of his journey to Austria and Italy, recently published by Baron de Montesquieu, was rather disappointing; and though we have no account of his journey to England, he has said enough on the subject elsewhere to show that even on things he was most interested in he did not gather information with the accuracy and precision of a man of science. But at that time most writers were less particular in this respect than in our days. In England Montesquieu frequented a society dissolute in morals, infidel in religion, skeptical in philosophy, but withal extremely intelligent. He was able to see and to understand what he saw. Inaccuracy in the details did not prevent his observations from giving a general impression of veracity which was not disputed by his contemporaries. Every one knows that Montesquieu was nowhere better appreciated than in England.

L'Esprit des Lois is a grand, lofty and enigmatic title. It is interpreted, at least partially, by the sub-title: "Of the relation which the laws should bear to the constitution of each government, to manners, climate, religion, trade, etc.," although

the unfinished enumeration leaves some perplexity in our minds. It is nothing less than a political and social philosophy, conceived after a new plan, and Montesquieu was quite justified in choosing as the motto of his book: *Prolem sine matre creatam.*

His predecessors, to whom he alludes in his preface, had not the same object in view. Some, as Grotius and Pufendorf, treated especially the theory of the law of nations. Others, like Hobbes, spoke as philosophers on the origin of society and the nature of the state; or like More and other Utopian dreamers of the sixteenth century, set up an ideal city in contrast to the real states they had before their eyes. Harrington, Algernon Sidney and Locke had written entirely from an English point of view. Locke's two treatises *On Civil Government* go back to first principles only in so far as it was necessary to vindicate the Revolution of 1688 and the conditions imposed upon the Prince of Orange, afterwards William III.

The work of Montesquieu is entirely different. It deals with political realities, and takes its materials from history and from observed facts; herein Montesquieu stands apart from the dreamers, but he differs also from Locke in not devoting his attention to the practical, or at least immediate, application of his theories. His aim is to study, as a philosopher, and in a strictly methodical way, that body of realities which was afterwards to become the subject of social science or sociology. Thus *L'Esprit des Lois* is, properly speaking, neither a

philosophy of politics nor a philosophy of history, nor a philosophy of law, nor a philosophy of political economy; for none of these sciences is here considered by itself, but all of them are studied in their natural relations so as to deduce the principles which are common to them. Montesquieu's originality consists in having fully perceived in the various series of social phenomena that solidarity by which each of these contributes to limit the others, and is in its turn limited by them. For instance, if the government of a country is a monarchy, the laws concerning education, luxury, trade, the condition of women, the liberty of citizens, etc., will necessarily be adapted to that political form; in a republican country they will be different. Social phenomena are thus subject to fixed attendant conditions, and can form only definite systems.

In a word, there are *laws of laws:* the political, civil and penal laws of any society are regulated, in their nature, their development, and even their form, by natural laws—that is, according to Montesquieu's celebrated definition, by the necessary relations derived from the nature of things. A profound thought, which tends to nothing less than subjecting to scientific form and method a vast domain hitherto neglected or regarded as inaccessible. A profound thought also, to seek the manifestation of those "laws of laws" in the mutual dependency of the various orders of social phenomena. Montesquieu thus assumes a point of

view superior to that of the jurist, the historian and the politician, and from which he overlooks them all. He shows, by means of history, how laws are modified in accordance with political forms—and in accordance not only with these, but also with the climate, the nature of the soil, the facilities for trade, etc. This was already a remarkable attempt towards a sociologic synthesis. Well could Montesquieu speak of the "majesty" of his subject. The conception is a fine one, and we may easily understand that it produced a deep impression at the time of its appearance.

Unfortunately the performance did not equal the conception. It undoubtedly has great merits. Despite a subject so austere and so unfamiliar to the very great majority of his readers, Montesquieu succeeded in not seeming dull to his contemporaries. He avoids the danger of being a doctrinaire and the no less formidable one of seeming partisan. He really looks upon all this political and social material with the eyes of a philosopher. Uneven as the work is, it is full of things both new and striking, which command attention and bear the impress of vigorous thought. All this is true, but it must be confessed it does not prevent *L'Esprit des Lois* from being but a poor fulfillment of the beautiful plan stated in the preface and the first chapters. There are several reasons for this incongruity. Some are in the very nature of the subject; others in the character and spirit of Montesquieu himself.

Auguste Comte has clearly shown that Mon-

tesquieu's attempt could not have been successful, because it was premature. In order that scientific sociology might be established it was essential that biology should be sufficiently advanced: for social phenomena, although not reducible to physiological phenomena, are yet closely united with the latter. In order to study social phenomena to any purpose, it is indispensable to be already reasonably well acquainted with the laws of the development of the human race and of its organic, intellectual and moral functions—laws which biology alone can discover. Now, at the time when Montesquieu wrote, biology as a science did not exist; hardly had chemistry, on which biology in its turn is immediately dependent, begun to be a science. It was therefore inevitable that Montesquieu should be unacquainted with the method which would have been suitable for the science of which he had conceived the idea; that he should seek a model among the methods of sciences already existing in his time—i. e., among the mathematical and physical sciences; and, as such a method is wholly unsuited to the investigation of sociologic laws, that there should be a sort of perpetual contradiction between Montesquieu's right *apprehension* of the subject he treats and the wrong *method* he applies to it.

That Montesquieu knew and admired the method of Descartes is beyond doubt. To be convinced of this, one only need to remember the lectures on physics and physiology which he deliv-

ered before the Academy of Bordeaux. In the *Lettres Persanes*, many a maxim reveals the Cartesian influence; this one, for instance: "The maker of nature gave motion to matter; no more was needed to produce the wonderful variety of effects we behold in the universe." Finally, in his preface to *L'Esprit des Lois*, Montesquieu explicitly announces his intention of using the deductive method. "I have laid down the general principles, and I have seen that particular cases adapt themselves to these as of their own accord, that the histories of all nations are but the consequences of them, and that each particular law is connected with some other law, or depends upon some more general one. . . . After I had found out my principles, all that I was seeking came to me." Montesquieu therefore really places, as Descartes does, the essential part of his method in the process which derives the particular from the universal, the complex from the simple, the consequence from the principle, in short, in deduction.

In fact, however, nothing is less deductive than *L'Esprit des Lois*. The reader will rather think himself in the presence of something badly put together, fragmentary and desultory. This impression is somewhat lessened as we look closer, but it does not disappear altogether. It may be so vivid that competent judges (not to mention Voltaire himself) have gone so far as to compare Montesquieu to his fellow-countryman, Montaigne, and to say that these two Gascons, though extremely

witty and deeply skilled in the art of style, were unacquainted with the art of composition. This is going too far, at least as regards Montesquieu; nevertheless, the mere fact of its having been possible, without any absurdity, to draw a comparison between Montaigne and a writer who piqued himself upon following the Cartesian method is significant enough. Shall we say that Montesquieu wished, at any cost, to avoid monotony, to keep awake the reader's interest, and to puzzle him by the curious arrangement of books and chapters? This may be, but a deeper reason may explain the condition of Montesquieu's book. If it is wanting in continuity, it is because the deductive reasoning, on the one hand, and the facts, on the other hand, do not connect. The deduction remains purely abstract, while the facts, of which Montesquieu collected such a vast number and the importance of which he duly felt, have little to do with the demonstration. Montesquieu usually infers a consequence from a given principle by reasoning alone. For instance, from the notion of a despotic or republican government, he infers the condition of women to be thus and so. In support of his conclusion, he quotes indifferently either a law in China, or one among the ancient Greeks, or an anecdote borrowed from the Travels of Chardin. He does not perceive that a fact thus set apart from its surroundings has no scientific or sociologic value whatever.

Montesquieu therefore lacked a method enabling

him to treat of sociological facts in the proper way. How can we wonder at this, when sociologists in our days have not yet been able to agree on their method? And yet they have before their eyes the comparative method employed in biology, which has given such favorable results, but which was unknown in the time of Montesquieu. As he had no idea of this comparative method (the only one applicable, however, when we study organic beings), he conceives social facts to be of the nature of physical phenomena, which are the same in all times and places. A given physical experiment, being performed under the same conditions, must give the same result, be it in London, in Paris or in Pekin. From this beginning Montesquieu thinks himself justified in borrowing his examples indifferently from Tacitus or Confucius. He arrives in this manner at the abstract idea of mankind as always and everywhere like unto itself, an idea which continued to prevail during the eighteenth century in France, though it was opposed by the celebrated theory of the influence of climate, a theory of which Montesquieu himself is the author.

Thus, if Montesquieu often seems to lack system, it is not for want of endeavor to acquire it. One might even reproach him with being too systematic (for instance, in his theory of constitutions) had he not, fortunately, a taste for facts. In him the historian and the keen observer of political things happily compensate for the philosopher badly prepared to build a sociologic system. The original

conception of the whole belongs to the latter; but it was the former who wrote the more permanent parts of *L'Esprit des Lois*.

It is hardly necessary, Montesquieu says, to seek the origin of society. Man lives only in society: this is a primitive fact, from which we must start, and the reason of which is in the very nature of man. Hobbes wrongly asserts that the natural state is that of war, and that justice and laws are purely matters of agreement. Were it really so, we ought to be in a state of continual terror, and "to pass by men as by lions." According to Montesquieu, on the contrary, no one is gratuitously bad, and in every human soul lives a principle of natural equity, which personal interest may indeed hide, but not smother. This principle, which underlies humanity, underlies also the social instinct: it makes it possible for states to be founded and maintained. We are surrounded with men stronger than ourselves; these can harm us in a thousand different ways. What a relief for us to feel that in the hearts of all those men there is an inward principle which is our ally and shields us from their attacks!

Montesquieu began the *Lettres Persanes* with his apologue of the Troglodytes. These people were so wicked and ferocious that they were ignorant of all principles of equity and justice. They refused to help one another in need, and they perished, victims of their own injustice. Only two families

survived, for "there were two very strange men in that country. They were humane, had a sense of justice and loved virtue. This virtue consisted in being charitable and helpful. A new race issued from them, that became prosperous, and defended itself victoriously, because it was just and virtuous." The apologue is remarkable on more accounts than one. We first see, as early as 1721 the abuse of the words "virtue" and "beneficence," which was to go on increasing as the century progressed, and the idyllic picture of a humanity gentle and sensible in a state of nature. Then again, Montesquieu bases human society on what he called equity, which was afterwards to be called altruism. Later, indeed, in *L'Esprit des Lois*, he asserts that there is a rational basis of justice and injustice, antecedent to experience, "just as all the radii in a circle are equal, even before the circle is drawn." Montesquieu does not choose between the two theories, or rather, he does not distinguish them. He deems it sufficient to oppose both of them to Hobbes, whom he is anxious to combat. Besides, he does not dwell much upon such hypothetical questions, and hastens to seek more solid ground.

In his purely political philosophy Montesquieu begins by distinguishing between the nature and the principle of each kind of government. "Its nature is what causes it to be such, and its principle is that which causes it to act. The one is its individual structure, the other the human passions which stir it." This distinction, broadly speaking,

corresponds to that between the anatomical and the physiological points of view. We may see in it Montesquieu's remarkable anticipation of the help he might have received from biology had it been sufficiently advanced in his time. Unfortunately, it was impossible for him to carry this idea very far and to draw from it scientific conclusions. His division of the forms of government shows already signs of preoccupation of a different kind. If he fails to consider the classifications of Plato and Aristotle, which he knew very well, and makes a distinction between republican, monarchical and despotic government, it is that he may not be reproached with attacking the existing order of things. He therefore says concerning despotism many things which he thinks apply to the French monarchy; the readers will catch the hints, and the official censors can wink at them. He is so thoroughly conscious of the artificial character of his classification that he almost directly endeavors to remedy it by subdividing republican governments into democracy and oligarchy. Besides, Montesquieu always has concrete examples present to his mind, even when he does not quote them. Despotism is Persia or Turkey, and occasionally also France under Louis XIV. His republic is the ancient city, Sparta, Athens or Rome. His monarchy means ordinarily the French monarchy, but sometimes the English, and lastly, his oligarchy is nearly always Venice.

By means of a minute and keen observation of

the historical types which Montesquieu takes to represent the various "forms" of government, and of the manners which predominate in each of them, one can find what he calls their principles. Thus virtue is obviously the mainspring of the ancient city, if we understand by this word, as the ancients did, unlimited devotion to the public cause. Fear is the principle of an absolute government, such as that of the Sultan or of the Shah of Persia, whose most arbitrary caprices are instantly obeyed without any discussion or opposition. And, lastly, honor is the mainspring of a monarchy such as the kingdom of France, in which everybody is jealously guarding the prerogatives and offices of the order to which he belongs.

Even while enunciating these forms and principles of government in a tone of gravity which leaves no doubt as to his impartiality, Montesquieu does not forbid himself some innuendo or satire when occasion prompts, and above all, he lets us see that he does not give the same weight to all these principles. Lowest of all in the scale stands despotism. Montesquieu purposely overdraws the picture, and one might sometimes imagine that he is speaking of Dahomey or Ashantee rather than of Turkey or Persia. Highest of all in rank stands the republic. To pass from the republican to the monarchical form—i. e., from virtue to honor as a principle—is deterioration. This idea already appears in the apologue of the Troglodytes. The latter, weary of freedom, wished to

have a king. They applied to a venerable old man, who answered: "I see how it is, O Troglodytes! Your virtue begins to lie heavy on you. In your present state, having no ruler, you must needs be virtuous, or else you could not exist, or you would relapse into the misfortunes of your forefathers. But your think the yoke too heavy, and you prefer submitting to a prince. You know that *then* you will be able to gratify your ambition, . . . and that, provided you avoid falling into great crimes, you will have no need of virtue."

This passage seems to throw light upon many others which recur frequently in *L'Esprit des Lois:* such as that monarchy maintains itself merely by the effect of laws, that in it virtue is not necessary, and that every one serves the public good while thinking to serve his private interests; that ambition, which is hurtful in a republic, has good effects in a monarchy, etc. Monarchism is set over against republicanism, as an inferior to a superior form; for the latter assumes men to be righteous—that is, just, charitable and devout—while monarchism supposes men to be selfish, but governs their mutual relations in such a way that their egotism serves the same ends as altruism. In a republic the common interest is everything. The word "fatherland" may be spoken there; and the love of it is inseparable from sound morals and disinterestedness. Everyone seeks only the welfare of all. No ambition is felt, no riches are coveted; all is perfect simplicity and frugality.

But this admirable state has not been seen on earth since antiquity, and the ancients themselves realized it but rarely, and for brief periods. It has become fabulous, like the Troglodytes. Montesquieu sees about him monarchies, furnished with hereditary nobility, caste-spirit, privileges and distinctions among men. Here ambition takes the place of patriotism. The state subsists independently of that sentiment, of a desire for true glory, of self-renunciation, of the sacrifice of one's nearest concerns. . . . Laws supply the place of all these dispensable virtues. We here perceive not only the excessive reliance upon the fabric of laws, which is one of Montesquieu's errors, but also the sublime and touching picture of the civic virtue of the ancients, which was destined later to become so commonplace. Every one knows how great a place was filled in the French Revolution by that romantic rather than historical ideal character, by that sort of composite figure, in which were blended the features of Regulus, Cincinnatus, Phocion, Epaminondas and other heroes of Plutarch or Livy. Rousseau has been severely criticised for having extolled this fictitious character; in justice the criticism should fall first on Montesquieu.

However that may be, this republic, the home of righteous men, is to Montesquieu a remote ideal. Despotism, on the other hand, seems to be confined to warm countries, among spiritless people, depressed by long ages of tyranny. There remains to consider the aristocratic or oligarchic republic,

and the monarchy. But aristocratic government, if it does not presume "virtue" among the people, does presume it among the nobility, which is an ideal as difficult to realize as that of the republic. In fact, Montesquieu judges very severely the oligarchies which he had seen. The Italian republics, he writes in his notes of travel, are but puny aristocracies which exist only on sufferance, and in which the nobles, devoid of all feelings of grandeur and glory, have no other ambition than to preserve their idleness and their prerogatives. The chief subject of his political meditations must therefore be the monarchy, which, under different laws, in France and in England, has raised these two nations to a high degree of prosperity and power.

Monarchy is the state, "in which one man governs, but under fixed and established laws." These laws are the very constitution of the state, which lives and prospers so long as they are respected. They establish in it classes, every one of which has its privileges and obligations corresponding to these privileges. Such government attains a state of perfection when the monarch and the classes, while pursuing their several objects, act nevertheless in concert, without trying to exceed their several functions. If the prince seeks to make his power absolute, he changes the nature of the monarchy; if the nobles deprive him of his power, the monarchy tends to become an aristocratic republic. The essential character of a monarchy is *constituted inequality*. In a despotic state

all men are equal, because everybody is nothing, the master alone is everything. Again, in a republic, all men are equal, because they all seek the public good alone, and have no private ambitions or privileges. But in monarchies men are necessarily unequal, from the king down to the lowest citizen, on account of their birth and of the class to which they belong. The power of the king meets a barrier in the party spirit of each class; and a nobleman who will unhesitatingly sacrifice his life to his king will refuse to sacrifice his honor.

This is an ideal of moderate government which Montesquieu seems to prefer to all others when he thinks of France, and which France did indeed enjoy at the time when "Gothic government" reached its perfection—i. e., the time of St. Louis. This explains the hatred he evinces in the *Lettres Persanes* toward Richelieu and Louis XIV, the expression of which reappears in *L'Esprit des Lois*. Richelieu made it his aim to reduce the power of the nobility, to take from them their privileges and their function in the state, and to make the king's power absolute. Louis XIV completed the work of Richelieu, and did all in his power to annihilate Parliament and to reduce this "depository of laws" to a purely administrative and judicial office. Both of them endeavored to destroy all "intermediate, surbordinate and dependent powers." But if these powers disappear, there is an end of constitution, "fundamental laws," and "mediate channels through which power may be applied." There is no longer

any barrier standing against the capricious will of the one man: we have a despot. "No nobility, no monarchy," is to Montesquieu a maxim with the force and effect of an axiom. Therefore abolishing the right of landed proprietors to administer justice, wiping out the last traces of the feudal system, abolishing the prerogatives of the nobility, of the clergy, of parliament (which had been the unchanging polity of the French kings for a century) is equivalent to "changing the constitution and transforming the monarchy into a despotism." And Montesquieu asks whether this is a wise thing to do.

The danger is all the greater because the transformation can be effected without a sudden revolution, and by an imperceptible transition, since in both governments, according to Montesquieu's own expression (which Voltaire did not fail to emphasize) "the power is the same." But in a monarchy the more mighty a king is made by the prestige of his crown, the more carefully should he abstain from abusing his power, and respect the rights of the classes established by the "fundamental" laws: for he is no less concerned in their preservation than they are in his. The picture of despotism drawn by Montesquieu is a sort of bugbear, a supreme and solemn warning to the French people and the French king. "Beware! this is what you are tending to! Do not wantonly destroy with your own hands the very conditions of existence of monarchy in France!" Montesquieu

is therefore, from his very liberalism, deliberately conservative. It is from fear of despotism to come and hatred of despotism already existing that he undertakes the defense of political inequality, for he sees in it the surest guaranty of the liberty to which the French have been accustomed.

Of course, there are other forms of liberty, for instance, that of the Spartans and Romans, but this was adapted only to the city of antiquity; and that of England, but this is inseparable from the spirit and character of the English race. Now Montesquieu does not propose to naturalize foreign institutions in France, an extremely delicate and perhaps impossible undertaking. The form of government in question is one that the French have actually had, and still have nominally; it would be sufficient, he thinks, that its spirit should be well understood, and that there should be an earnest endeavor to restore it. The reformation of the French monarchy, in his mind, would consist in bringing it back to the purity of its type, an ambition apparently more modest and in fact more impracticable than the demand for even a radical transformation of existing institutions. Had sociology existed in the days of Montesquieu, it would have shown him that the French monarchy of the sixteenth century was an organic unity of morals, beliefs, traditions—in short, of outward and inward conditions which had changed irrevocably, and that the monarchy, along with these conditions, now belonged to the past.

The seventh chapter of the eleventh book of *L'Esprit des Lois*, which treats of the English constitution, is perhaps the part which has been most read, and the influence of which has been most lasting. The object of this constitution, he maintains, is liberty. The whole array of laws, and the famous separation of the three functions: executive, legislative and judicial, all tend to preserve the liberty of the citizens. We need not examine here whether Montesquieu gave an accurate description of the English constitution in his time, and whether he had closely observed its structure and working, and in what measure he was inspired by Algernon Smith or by Locke. Besides, he seems to have tried above all to imitate what he greatly admired in the *Germania* of Tacitus. He wanted not so much to give a scrupulously faithful picture of the English constitution as to offer his readers, as a lofty lesson in politics, the example of a free people under a monarchical government. It is the counterpart of his picture of despotism. In both cases the details are slightly exaggerated in order to attain the end which the author had in view; and just as despotism becomes a bugbear, the English constitution becomes an ideal. It is not altogether his fault if the lesson, being misinterpreted, called forth clumsy and unfortunate attempts at imitation. We see, in his Notes on England, that he judged the English society of his time severely, and thought it threatened with imminent degeneration. He nevertheless discerned and appreciated

the essential features of the English character, and I question whether, after all, the picture he drew of it (Book 19, chapter xxi of *L'Esprit des Lois*,) is not still among the best—and, at any rate, more accurate than that of Taine.

Among the "English things" for which Montesquieu roused a desire on the Continent we must reckon first judicial organization, especially penal judicature. Montesquieu showed that in England the judicial power, "so awful among men," becomes, so to speak, invisible and nugatory, and is never an instrument of arbitrary oppression in the hands of the executive power. Every person accused of crime is judged by his peers, and has the right to challenge his judges. Nobody can be imprisoned without being examined at once, and, if expedient, released on bail. Torture is never employed. In one word, man is free. It was not by any means the same in France, where still existed a shameful inconsistency between the comparatively mild manners and the arbitrary and barbarous criminal procedure. Chancellor d'Aguesseau still thought torture indispensable. Every one knows with what spirited indignation Montesquieu speaks of it: "I hear the voice of nature crying out against me." And nobody did more than he in behalf of the introduction of trial by jury.

Penalties need reformation quite as much as does procedure, for "cruelty in penalties does not cause the laws to be better obeyed. In countries where

punishments are moderate, they are dreaded as much as in those where they are tyrannical and terrible. The imagination adapts itself to the customs of the country one lives in. A week's imprisonment, or a small fine, or the despair brought on by the disgrace of being convicted, produce as much effect upon a European as the most cruel punishment does upon an Asiatic." Cruel penalties even thwart their own aim. If you punish mere theft as severely as theft combined with manslaughter, murder will multiply: with equal risk the thief finds it to his advantage to put witnesses out of the way. Therefore, public interest, nature and the liberty of the citizens agree in demanding "that arbitrariness should cease, that the penalty should not originate in the caprice of the legislator, but in the nature of the case; in short, that criminal laws should derive each penalty from the particular nature of the offence." A suggestive maxim, the happy consequences of which have not yet all been drawn by criminal law, even in our own time, and which, if fully understood, would require us to take into account not only the particular nature of the transgression, but also that of the transgressor.

But can it also be applied to offences against religion? Without the least doubt. Among these crimes, those which consist in disturbing public worship are really offences against the peace and safety of the citizens, and should be punished as such. Real offences against religion are direct

attacks made upon it; and the only punishment suited to the nature of the case (according to the above principle) is exclusion from the privileges of religion, or excommunication. Where there is no action witnessed by the public, there is no cause for criminal process; it is a matter between the individual and God. The evil here has sprung from the idea that we must avenge divinity. Now we should pay honor to divinity, but never avenge it, otherwise there would be no end of tortures. In this spirit Montesquieu wrote his "Most humble remonstrances to the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitors."

Montesquieu's plea for toleration, to say nothing of the force of the arguments and of the eloquence of the writer, attracted public attention all the more strongly as Montesquieu was not suspected of any anti-religious sentiment. It is true, there was biting satire in the *Lettres Persanes* against monks and worldly abbés. But in *L'Esprit des Lois* all religious subjects, as a rule, are treated with gravity and moderation. Montesquieu speaks as a philosopher and a statesman, who has learned from the philosophy of history the part played by religion in the evolution of mankind. He observes that he must look at things from the statesman's point of view, which does not coincide with that of the theologian, and that public policy recommends toleration in the well-contrived interest of the state. Whatever his inmost feelings may be as regards Christianity in particular, his public attitude is irre-

proachably respectful. In this point, as in many others, his prudence was perfect. Being often as bold as most of the "philosophers" of the eighteenth century, having like them, and before them, touched upon the most burning and forbidden questions, he nevertheless preserved a reputation for wisdom and moderation. Conservatives have always been wont to contrast him with Rousseau; and yet modern socialists might also claim him as one of their precursors. Did he not write that "the state owes to every citizen a sure living, food, suitable clothes and a method of life not inconsistent with health?"

We cannot here enter into the details of Montesquieu's historical, political and judicial views, but it is impossible to pass over in silence his theory of public international law, which was new and significant of his time. This branch of law, he had said in the *Lettres Persanes*, such as it now is, is a science that teaches princes how far they can violate justice without injuring their own interests. It is iniquity reduced to a system. But there are not two kinds of justice, and the relations between nations should be regulated by the same laws in principle as the relations between private persons. "Public international law is the civil law of the world." At the end of the century, Kant, in his celebrated pamphlet, "*Zum ewigen Frieden*," declares precisely the same principles, adding that he conceives indeed the possibility of submitting international politics to the moral law, but not of regulating

morals by politics. These theories are connected with a system of ideas current at that time, according to which the various nations were looked upon as members of one family. "Should I know," says Montesquieu, "of something which was useful to my country but prejudicial to mankind, I should regard the divulging of it as nothing less than a crime."

At the foundation of this philosophical cosmopolitanism, if we lay aside the sentimental and optimistic element in it, we may discern two important ideas which we shall meet more than once in the course of the eighteenth century. One represents humanity as being always and everywhere the same, and consequently entitled to a like respect in every human being. The other makes universality a characteristic of truth. The certitude of mathematical truths comes from their being obvious to all minds; in a like way, what is just in politics must satisfy every human conscience, independently of all interests, even those of our country. French philosophy and literature were the vehicles of these ideas throughout the world; and wherever the ascendancy of French writers and philosophers decreased, this cosmopolitanism suffered a corresponding decadence.

In less than two years *L'Esprit des Lois* ran through twenty-two editions. It was immediately translated into the chief European languages. Montesquieu's death, in 1755, was a public grief,

not only for France, but for all thinkers abroad. And yet it is a fact that *L'Esprit des Lois*, though much admired, was never popular even in France. This disfavor does not include either the *Lettres Persanes*, which still amuse and interest in our day, or the *Considérations sur les Causes de la Grandeur et de la Décadence des Romains*, which have maintained a place among French literary classics. There must, therefore, be in *L'Esprit des Lois*, notwithstanding the beauties of the work, something peculiar which repels, or at least fails to attract, the reader. It surely cannot be the subject, for the French public in general is fond of political and sociological topics. It seems rather to be the fluctuant and indecisive method, neither frankly abstract nor positively historical. French minds are fond of "trenchant styles of writing." They may also have been puzzled by the way in which the books and chapters are broken up and scattered. They are accustomed to books composed in a simpler and more lucid way.

Let us make haste, and say that the influence of a work of this kind is to be measured not by the number but by the quality of its readers. The influence of *L'Esprit des Lois* was wonderfully great. Governing statesmen, as a rule, take little notice of political philosophers, whom they look upon as dreamers, lacking in common sense and ignorant of practical politics; and they are little disposed to take into account any unsolicited advice. Montesquieu had the rare good fortune to become an

authority in their eyes, and to be often quoted by them. Many of his views on political liberty, on constitutional monarchy, on the distribution of powers, on penal procedure, on religious toleration, etc., have found their way into the laws of several European countries. His prestige did not suffer as much as that of the other philosophers of the eighteenth century from the reaction which set in towards the beginning of the nineteenth. Many sound minds even thought they found in him the happy medium which they were seeking between the Revolution and the equally untenable counter-revolution. He became the patron saint of liberal doctrinaries.

From a scientific point of view, he really introduced the philosophy of government which was to have such a great development in France. True, he stands distinctly apart from the "philosophers" who were to succeed him. He does not, like nearly all of them, despise everything between the Roman period and the sixteenth century. He does not look upon the Middle Ages as a disgrace to humanity. On the contrary, he speaks of the feudal laws with esteem, and even with a warmth which was rare in him. He would have liked to study this "splendid subject," and the word "Gothic," which was soon to become a synonym of all that was rude and barbarous, is used by Montesquieu to designate the government he most praises. His education as jurist and his knowledge as historian guard him here against rash and unjust assertions.

Others were bold where he was prudent, extravagant where he was moderate. They attempted to introduce into France the morals and principles of the ancient republics. They attacked not simply intolerance, but religion itself. In a word, they did all that Montesquieu abstained from doing, and which he would perhaps have criticised most severely.

Nevertheless, it was he that opened the way for them. After him, strengthened by his example and by his authority, they were able without much difficulty to establish themselves in the domain of political and social sciences. The "philosophers" understood this, and in spite of all differences of ideas and tone, they always claimed him as one of themselves.

CHAPTER VI.

VOLTAIRE.

We must not turn to Voltaire for an original conception of the universe, which connects the whole of reality with a first principle, or for a constant concern for the metaphysical problems upon which both science and action depend. It is a well-known fact that Voltaire was not akin to such men as Plato, Descartes and Spinoza. These lived only to seek disinterestedly after truth. If they influenced the world, it was from afar, and through a slow diffusion of their principles—a result all the deeper and more durable coming as it did from a greater height. Voltaire wished for immediate effects. He was not above the world; he was, on the contrary, what the Germans call a *Weltkind*. He loved wealth, success, honors; he was eager for literary fame. He lived in the midst of controversy, and was never weary of it. He was full of craft and cunning, and curious regarding the most trifling as well as the most important objects.

In spite of this, his contemporaries, and the greatest among them—Kant, for instance, did not think they ought to deny Voltaire the name of philosopher. Let us not be more exacting than they. Let us acknowledge, as they did, that the philos-

ophy of Voltaire, though not strictly reduced to a system, is nevertheless diffused through his work, and is the very soul of it. It is expressed in his novels, in his historical works, and even in his tragedies, as well as in his essays and in the philosophical dictionary. It is, indeed, characterized rather by wide range than by depth. Voltaire was addressing the public at large. He preaches and rails indefatigably; his satires are sermons, and his sermons satires. He makes use in a thousand different shapes of the process familiar to all great journalists, of whom he was the first—namely, repetition. He is thus led to an extreme simplification of his philosophy, and reduces it to a small number of propositions, which require no effort to be understood. But just as we make an effort in order to grasp clearly the meaning of some abstruse metaphysician in spite of his obscurity, so should we endeavor to bring out Voltaire's philosophical thought in spite of the excessive zeal for clearness by which it is often distorted.

Is this philosophy, as has been claimed, an engine of war against the Church and the Roman Catholic dogmas? No doubt it is that, but not that alone. It aims not only to destroy, but also to build up. As Voltaire was much better fit for the former task than for the latter, he was infinitely more successful in it. But this is no reason either for suspecting his sincerity when he seeks to be constructive, or for dismissing without a word an effort the effect of which has not yet disappeared.

Voltaire's religious philosophy, for instance, is even in our days that of many people who do not acknowledge, or sometimes even suspect, that it is so.

The philosophy of Voltaire varied, but less than might have been expected in the course of so long a life from such a mobile nature as his, so keenly alive to every new prompting of the spirit of the age. Thus, in his *Traité de Métaphysique* (1734), he admits free-will, and later on, in the *Philosophe ignorant* (1766), he confesses that Collins had converted him to determinism. He changed his opinion also on the question of the eternity of the world. His semi-pessimism became more bitter as he grew older. But on the main points of his doctrine, on God, the soul, morals, the essential principle of religion, Voltaire was always consistent with himself. He saw most of the Encyclopædists follow after Diderot and go even much farther; in spite of their urgent entreaties, and at the risk of seeming a conservative and almost a reactionist, he refused to swerve from his theories. In a man so careful of his popularity as Voltaire was, this is a sure proof of his attachment to a body, if not a system, of philosophical ideas.

Introduced when still a mere youth to the society of the *Temple*, Voltaire was initiated into the philosophy of the "libertines," and was thus in direct connection with the anti-religious movement in the seventeenth century. He was well

acquainted with Fontenelle and Bayle, not quite so well with Malebranche, and but slightly with Descartes, though he often mentions him. He seems to see in Descartes only the author of the hypothesis of vortices and plenum; one wonders whether he ever read the *Discours de la Méthode* and the *Méditations*. He certainly did not enter deeply into them. It was in England that Voltaire became fond of philosophy. Locke and Newton were his masters in the art of thinking. On his return to France, full of what he had learned, he undertook the introduction of Newton's physics and Locke's empiricism. The zeal and talent of such a disciple contributed in no small degree to make them known and admired. It is true, he did not present to his readers the entire works of either Locke or Newton; he rather "adapted" them, according to his own taste and to the supposed taste of the public.

The success was considerable, and one cannot tell whether the *Lettres Anglaises* did more for the European fame of Locke and Newton, or for the reputation of him who expounded their doctrines so skillfully.

Voltaire admires everything, or nearly everything, in Locke. His book, he says, is a masterpiece of patience and wisdom; but what pleases him perhaps above everything else is Locke's conception of philosophy, and the course he pursued. Locke is an unassuming man, a sage, who never

pretends to know that of which he is ignorant, and does not grapple with problems beyond his capacity; when he meets with such problems he avoids them. Such philosophical prudence, according to Voltaire, marks a turning-point in the history of human thought. He places on one side all philosophers whose works are metaphysical inventions, which, though ingenious, we do not feel to be expressive of reality; and on the other, the "sage," Locke, cautiously going forward so long as he is guided by experience, and stopping as soon as his guide abandons him. "From Plato down to him, there has been nothing,"—a sweeping assertion which the reader is not to take literally. We must make due allowance for literary exaggeration, and for the desire of striking the attention, and understand that "all philosophers since Plato have written the romance of the soul, and that Locke was the first to write its history." Locke, in short, discovered the true philosophical method. Voltaire even goes so far as to say that there never was a more accurate logician, and that Locke had "a geometrician's mind,"—which is a rather surprising statement.

Being in possession of the true method, Locke addressed himself to the only problems which are susceptible of being solved. Philosophy in his hands ceased to be fantastic and arbitrary, and became positive and certain. He contented himself with unfolding the operations of the soul, i. e., following them in their order and progress. Thus "his book contains nothing but truths, and what

makes the work perfect is that all these truths are clear."

It would be difficult to carry the hyperbole of praise farther, and yet, strange to say, in a book so full of truths Voltaire seems to have seen only a few, to which he constantly recurs. Of the rich and varied contents of Locke's *Essay*, he retained but a small number of propositions which he accepted without question. Voltaire himself has more than once given a summary of what he owed to Locke, which in fact is limited to empiricism and the refutation of innate ideas. But of the analysis of complex ideas, the theory of language, the study of the idea of power, the general definition of ideas, and so many other interesting points in Locke, we observe no trace in Voltaire.

On the other hand, an hypothesis which holds but a small place in Locke's *Essay* assumed a very great importance in Voltaire's eyes. Locke said: "We shall perhaps never be able to know whether a purely material being thinks or not." According to Voltaire, nothing so sensible has ever been or will ever be said about the nature of the soul. Even the dubious form in which Locke expresses his thought is the only suitable one. On a metaphysical question of this kind a judicious man will always keep to "perhaps." But how many unsuccessful attempts have been required to bring philosophers to such necessary modesty! From Plato down to Descartes and Leibniz, all have assumed to know what the essence of the soul is, and they

all have plunged into inextricable difficulties. Cartesians, for instance, who made of the soul a thing, the whole nature of which is to think, were very much embarrassed when they came to animals. What a pity and what a poor conception it was to say that animals are machines without any knowledge or feeling! If they are mere machines, you certainly are to them only what a chronometer is to a kitchen clock. Conversely, if you have the honor of possessing a spiritual soul, animals also have one. Choose, if you dare, between a machine man and the immortal soul of a flea or a grub. Cartesians can never get out of this dilemma in which Bayle had already confined them.

Let us rather trust to experience, the only sure guide; let us stop where it stops. It teaches us that we exist, feel and think. But if we try to take a step farther, we fall into an abyss of darkness. We have no organ through which we can know what the soul is. Voltaire would fain say, as Hume does, that we have no idea of anything of which we have not an impression. Now, there is no impression which teaches us what the soul is. It is as completely absent in us as are the senses possessed by the man from Sirius mentioned in *Micromégas*. We are reduced to conjectures necessarily uncertain. What, then, must we do? What Locke and Newton did. We must learn to doubt. However, Voltaire does not content himself with this prudent reserve. Without assuming to *know* the substance of the soul, since we have no means

of gaining this knowledge, we may make conjectures, provided we do not mistake our hypotheses for certain facts. Now, the one which Locke so timidly put forward pleased Voltaire very much. What if God in His infinite might had endowed matter with the power to think? We have no right to maintain that it is so; but neither has any one the right to maintain that it is not. We know on the one hand that God is all-powerful, and on the other hand we do not know what matter is in itself; we know some of its qualities or properties, but not its substance: therefore what right have I to maintain that God has not granted to organized substance power to feel or think? Is it fit for such a limited and ignorant being as I am to determine of my own authority what God may or may not have done? To call this hypothesis absurd and contradictory is impertinent dogmatism; it is not only to set bounds to the divine Power, but also to presume to know the essence of matter and soul, which nobody has ever known or ever will know.

If, therefore, during all his life Voltaire remained attached to this hypothesis of Locke, it was not at all from a secret tendency to materialism; on the contrary, it was because it permitted him to reject at once and on the same ground materialism and spiritualism. The former affirms more than it knows; for how can it say that everything is matter while it does not know what the essence of matter is? But ordinary spiritualism is no less shocking. In order to explain these phe-

nomena that have no parallel in the material world—thoughts, feelings, memory, etc.—it imagines a special principle, spiritual, distinct from the body and situated within it, which it calls the soul. But is it not obvious that "soul" is an abstract word, as well as "motion"? What is concrete is the thoughts, feelings and volitions. A fine advantage it is to have given substance to an abstraction, and to say that it is the soul which thinks, feels, wills, etc.!

Thus Voltaire does not represent thought as an attribute which God can at will give to matter or take away from it, as we can at our pleasure magnetize or demagnetize an iron bar. Freed from that puerile form, his reflections on the soul deserve some attention. He meant to imply that in our ignorance of what is at the bottom of things, the dualism of the soul and the body is an unproved assertion; "that the supposition of a distinct soul was not a solution, but simply another statement of the problem"; and lastly, that to accept it was to be contented with mere words. "A tulip or a rose," he says, "is produced by an incomprehensible mechanism, and yet we suppose no soul in them. Nor do we suppose any in insects, which live and die. In animals we admit instinct, but we do not at all know what it is. And when we suppose a soul in man, do we understand ourselves any better?" In modern language this means that we cannot account for the functions of the soul till we see their connection with organic functions. Voltaire

then has here a twofold merit: he has clearly seen that the metaphysical study of the soul had been verbal and sterile; and he has perceived, though dimly, that a positive science of the soul might perhaps become possible some day when biology was more advanced.

When Voltaire wished to publish his *Éléments de la Philosophie de Newton*, he was denied a copyright because he combated Descartes. Cartesianism, once persecuted, was now officially patronized. It was hard for novelties to effect an entrance into the Academy of Sciences. After Maupertuis Voltaire was the first declared Newtonian in France. His account of Newton's system is remarkably clear and sufficiently exact. He states in it, together with the law of universal gravitation, Newton's chief discoveries in optics. But at the same time he adds to it a part entitled *Metaphysics*, which, being placed first, seems to command all the rest, and is much more Voltaire's metaphysics than Newton's.

And indeed, as the saying goes, Voltaire killed two birds with one stone: he made Newton known, and at the same time turned him to good account for his own cause. He admired the genius who discovered the law of universal gravitation and decomposed light; but he also found in him a valuable patron for the natural religion which he preached. With Newton's name he would silence all adversaries, whoever they might be, atheists or Catholics. He would answer them all: "I am a

religious man, as the great Newton was." He relates, in the *Lettres Anglaises*, that the accounts he heard in London of Newton's piety moved him deeply. He then understood that, to use Bacon's phrase, "a little science inclineth man's mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion." With Newton the "physicist becomes the herald of Providence; a catechist reveals God to children, and a Newton demonstrates Him to sages." The work of the universe, when better known, proves the existence of One who wrought it, and so many unchanging laws prove that of a law-giver. "Wholesome philosophy," therefore, destroyed atheism, which "obscure theology" supplied with weapons.

Voltaire loves to dwell on the affinity between Newton's views and natural religion. According to Newton, he says, (and also according to reason), there is such a thing as a vacuum. Matter therefore does not exist of necessity. It must, then, have received existence from a free cause. Therefore there is a God. So that a consistent Newtonian cannot help being a deist (*deist* and *theist* have the same meaning to Voltaire). And that, indeed, they all are. One cannot say the same of Cartesians. Their system produced that of Spinoza; and many other Cartesians were led to admit no other God than the immensity of things; in this they were consistent, since Descartes supposes a plenum, and thinks the world infinite, and most probably also eternal. This did not prevent the French authori-

ties from rejecting, in the name of Cartesianism, the new science of physics, which, on the other hand, leads to a knowledge of the true God!

The strongest, or at least the most specious, of the objections which the Cartesians for a long time raised against Newton often occurs in Fontenelle. It consists in the contention that attraction is an occult quality, and that physics by accepting it would retrograde toward the scholasticism of the Middle Ages. To which Voltaire pertinently answered: What do you understand by an occult quality? Do you mean that the essence of the force manifested in the phenomena of gravitation and gravity is unknown to us? I confess it is. But then, not only these, but also life, thought, heat, capillarity and all things are occult qualities; we do not know the essence of anything. Do you mean that Newton simply revived a word which explains nothing? You then forget the beautiful demonstration he gave of his laws. Attraction is but a name: the demonstrations are the essential parts of his theory.

After having contributed more than any other man to spread in France the discoveries of Newton, Voltaire ceased to concern himself much with astronomy and physics. But he never ceased to seek in Newton's physics a help for his demonstration of the existence of God.

In Voltaire's philosophy the ontological proof has disappeared, since he does not admit innate

ideas. There remain, therefore, the cosmological proof and the proof by means of final causes. For the former, it is precisely Newton's physics on which he relies for support. Newton in fact says: "There is a Being who has necessarily been self-existent from all eternity, and who is the origin of all other beings. This Being is infinite in duration, immensity and power; for what can limit Him?" But may not the material world be that very Being? You might suppose so, answers Voltaire, should you, as the Cartesians do, admit the plenum and the infinity and eternity of the world. Nothing is so easy as to pass from this to materialism—that is, to a doctrine which makes matter the eternal substance, and knows no other God. (Thus, to Voltaire the words "materialist" and "atheist" are almost always synonymous.) But the Newtonians, from the very fact of their admitting a vacuum, admit that matter has had a beginning, that motion needs a first cause, in short, a creating God. Still, when Voltaire later on came to think that the universe must be eternal, as the very thought of God who caused it to exist, this argument lost some of its force, or at least ought to have been restated in a different form. If Voltaire did not attend to it, it was probably because he was fully satisfied with another proof, concerning which he never changed his mind—i. e., the proof based on final causes.

No doubt he was the first to laugh at the abuse made of the argument from design. "Noses were made to wear spectacles; therefore we have spec-

tacles. Legs were obviously instituted that they might be clad, and so we have knee-breeches; stones, that they might be cut; swine, that they might be eaten, and so on." But never did Voltaire find anything ridiculous in the thought that the whole of nature bears witness to Him who created it. "When I observe the order, the prodigious contrivances, the mechanical and geometrical laws which reign over the universe, the innumerable means and ends of all things, I am overcome with admiration and awe. Nothing can shake my faith in this axiom: 'Every piece of work implies a workman.'" This workman we have already met with: it is Fontenelle's "watchmaker." Voltaire uses almost exactly the same expressions as Fontenelle: "When we behold a fine machine, we say that there is a good machinist, and that he has an excellent understanding. The world is assuredly an admirable machine; therefore there is in the world an admirable intelligence, wherever it may be. This argument is old, and is none the worse for that."

Voltaire thinks to give this argument a deeper basis by adding that "nature is art," which means that there is properly speaking no nature, since all existing things are the work of some great unknown Being who is both very powerful and very industrious. He thus carries to its utmost limits the clear notion of finality, which is borrowed directly from the analogy between the order in the universe and the productions of human art. But of what value is this analogy? German philosophy, on the con-

trary, likes to show that the idea of finality is an obscure one, because the way in which nature engenders and animates beings resembles in no wise the industry of man. Man makes use of materials and springs, and puts together pieces of various origins; he works from the outside, whereas nature works from the inside. Instead of explaining nature by means of art, we ought rather to interpret art by nature; for if we do not understand the organizing and restoring power of nature, neither can we explain the creating genius of the poet or the artist; the finality of nature is not clear, as Voltaire thought it to be: it is mysterious. We cannot help supposing it to exist, says Kant; but neither can we understand what it is.

Voltaire was not conscious of these difficulties. His proof seemed to him flawless, and he steadily maintained to the last the existence of God, even against his friends. This is not only because, as we shall see later, God is needed for social ethics. When Voltaire weighs the reasons for or against atheism and theism from a purely theoretical point of view, he thinks the latter preferable to the former. "In the opinion that there is a God we meet with difficulties, but in the contrary opinion there are absurdities." For instance, to come back to Newton, who plays so large a part in Voltaire's natural theology, the atheist, as we have said, is a materialist: he acknowledges the existence of infinite matter, of a plenum; he therefore stands in contradiction with Newton. Now, Newton cer-

tainly has spoken the truth; atheism is therefore untenable. Voltaire's reasoning is perhaps over-simplified, on account of his constant endeavor to be clearly understood even by the most careless reader. But the leading idea is an interesting one: to give up such of our metaphysical ideas as are incompatible with well-grounded scientific truths. This is precisely what we do in the present century.

The existence of God being once settled, if we try to determine His attributes, innumerable difficulties arise, so great that Voltaire assumes the position which was to be defended later by Demea, in Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, and which is, properly speaking, that of the deist. "The existence of God is proved to me, but His attributes and His essence I think I am proved to be unfit to understand." Philosophy does indeed show us that there is a God, but has no power to teach us what He is, what He does, and wherefore He does so or so; He alone can know. Let us, therefore, abstain from attributing our own qualities to God and making Him in our own image. Neither human justice, nor human kindness, nor human wisdom can be His. It is useless to stretch these *ad infinitum;* they will never be aught but human qualities whose boundaries have been extended. Thus, Clarke was wrong in attributing intelligence to God because He created intelligent beings. God may have created spirit and matter without Himself being either matter or spirit.

We have here a good example of the application of the prudent method so strongly recommended by Voltaire to philosophers; but Voltaire himself does not always adhere to it. In another place, in fact, he congratulates Newton upon having said that the knowledge of God would be sterile but for the knowledge of His relation to the world; and he himself writes, in his *Homélie sur l'Athéisme:* "I am told that the justice of God is not the same as ours. It were just as well to tell me that 2+2=4 is not the same to God as it is to me." He can make nothing of a God who is not a righteous God.

But if God is just, how can there be evil, and so much of it, in the world?—a formidable objection, which is the strong point of atheists and puzzled Voltaire very sorely. Between Bayle and Leibniz, he obviously inclines toward Bayle. *Candide*, his masterpiece, was born out of his exasperation against an optimism that was blind and deaf to the wrongs, pains and evils which abound in the universe. But on the other hand, Voltaire feels the need of a belief in the justice of God. We are not a little surprised to see him take up again in detail most of the answers made by Leibniz to Bayle. He insists that Providence does not act through private volitions, but according to general laws. He endeavors to prove that evil was inevitable, and that there is as little of it as possible. "There certainly are things which the supreme Intelligence cannot prevent. Evil is one of them. I had rather worship a limited than a wicked God. I cannot

possibly offend Him when I say: Thou hast done all that a powerful, kind and wise being could do. It is not Thy fault if Thy works cannot be as good and perfect as Thou art." In one word, whereas Leibniz justifies God, Voltaire excuses Him. Leibniz says that this is the best possible world; Voltaire, that it is as little bad as possible. The difference between them is reduced to a mere trifle, especially if we agree that this world, whether the best or the least bad, contains much evil anyhow. But the doctrine of Leibniz is an organic part of a profound metaphysics of which Voltaire had no idea whatever. Voltaire does not go beyond the point of view of common experience; he holds fast to what we have termed semi-pessimism, being by turns incensed or resigned, according as his look is fixed upon the world or is lifted up to God.

Having got through this difficult passage, Voltaire comes to natural religion, which is the core of his philosophy. For this natural religion, or theism, does not go beyond the supposition that there is a righteous God, and that man's reason is capable of rising up to Him. Theism consists in worshiping God, the Father of men, and in practicing virtue—that is, justice to all men. These two elements were sufficient, but both are necessary. Neither morality nor belief in the existence of God can alone constitute theism. Morality without a God of justice does not sufficiently protect society; belief in the existence of God, without morals, is

not a religion, and remains fruitless. What is a true theist? One who says to God: "I adore and serve Thee"; one who says to the Turk, the Chinese, the Indian and the Russian: "I love you." He looks upon all men as his brethren, and worships in God their common Father.

Was it, then, an ideal religion that Voltaire opposed to the existing religions? If so, it would have had little chance against these, and of this Voltaire was fully aware. Therefore he says that theism is not the work of philosophers but a real religion, and, moreover, the most ancient and widely spread of all. This seems a paradox not easily to be reconciled with the facts. According to Voltaire, wherever there is a religion theism also exists, though mingled with all sorts of belief and of absurd, bloody and ferocious superstitions. The progress of mankind consists in this, that little by little the pure ore of natural religion is freed from the coarse rock in which it was buried. Therein lies the fairest glory of the age which produced Locke and Newton. The age did not invent theism, for this natural religion is as ancient as thinking mankind; but brought it again to the light. "Theism has made wonderful progress. The Earl of Shaftesbury says that one cannot respect too highly the great name of theist. A multitude of illustrious writers have openly professed it; most of the Socinians have at last taken that position." Thus did that natural religion

flourish again "which was that of the Hebrew nation before Moses taught them a particular form of worship."

Is it to be argued that this pretended antiquity of theism is imaginary and invented for the sake of the present need? Voltaire has a decisive reply. He brings in the Chinese. Here is an empire, larger than the world known to the ancients, admirable for its wise and lasting institutions, and whose religion happens to be precisely theism. What has been the religion of the cultured classes in China for so many centuries past? "Worship heaven and be just." Though a few superstitions could not be prevented from spreading among the rabble (which, besides, has no need of enlightenment), all well-informed people there have been theists from time immemorial. We speak wrongly of the religion of Confucius, comparing it to our Western religions. Confucius preached no mysteries. He was the prototype of the perfect theist.

Thus theism is not an imaginary religion. To it, far rather than to the Church of Rome, ought we to apply the noble name of catholicism; for it includes not only all Roman Catholics, not only all Christians, but all mankind. It unites all churches in a truly universal church, which is humanity. The theist's religion is indeed the most ancient and most widely spread, for "the simple worship of one God preceded all the systems in the world."

It is a great pity that we should not have been as fortunate as the Chinese. How is it that theism,

which among them was preserved in its purity, has degenerated among the Western nations? It is because upon natural religion, which comprised only belief in God and the practice of virtue, dogmas were grafted, and from them all the evil has sprung. Natural religion is the beneficial product of man's reason; dogmas are the accursed work of priests and divines. Their motives may easily be conjectured. Law-givers had contented themselves with laying down sensible and useful precepts; their disciples and commentators wished to improve on them, and said: "We shall not be sufficiently respected if our founder has not had something supernatural and divine about him. Our Numa needs must have met with the nymph Ægeria," etc. These wretched disciples and detestable commentators did not perceive that they were perverting the whole of mankind.

This very simple hypothesis on the origin of dogmas being once accepted, the great use made of it by Voltaire is well known. The knavery of priests who practice upon men's foolishness and credulity, their impudent quackery, their domineering spirit, their theological quarrels, the persecutions, the slaughter of unbelievers and heretics, the "ten millions of Christians" who perished in wars or tortures—all these things, which polluted and dishonored the innocence of natural religion, made their appearance in the train of dogmas. The history of religions, and particularly that of Christianity, occasions in Voltaire a sort of pang and

shudder, as would a nightmare in which the grotesque contends with the odious. Theological quarrels are at once the most ridiculous farce and the most dreadful plague in the world. And Voltaire wonders that there should not be one religion whose precepts are not the work of a sage, and whose dogmas are not the invention of a madman.

Again, universality is a token of truth. Now, all dogmas are different from one another, while morality is the same among all men. The universal character of morals was a cherished tenet with Voltaire, and he set his heart upon demonstrating it with the help both of reasoning and experience. Would society have existed at all if men had not conceived the idea of justice, which is the link of every society? "How could the Egyptian and the Scythian have had the same fundamental notions of justice and injustice had not God in all ages given to both of them *reason*, which, as it develops, brings into their view the same necessary principles?" Voltaire himself does not perceive that this reason is singularly akin to the innate ideas he so often ridiculed. Descartes and Leibniz might have contented themselves with what he here admits; they said no more than he did. Voltaire was at least aware that he differed here from Locke. He wondered at this declared theist saying that men have different ideas concerning justice. "There is but one science of morals, as there is but one of geometry."

Shall we turn to facts for an answer? In Siam,

China and India, in classical antiquity, among the savages, in all times and places, men have been taught that they must be just. There are deeds which the whole world thinks beautiful. The round-eyed, squat-nosed negro, who will not call our ladies of the court beautiful, will unhesitatingly bestow that qualification upon these deeds and maxims. The more I have seen men differing in climate, customs, language, laws, worship, and in their degree of intelligence, the more I have observed them to have the same fundamental morals. Every nation has particular religious rites and most often absurd and revolting opinions on metaphysics and theology; but if the question arises as to whether we must be just, the whole universe is of one mind.

If, then, we wish to be sensible, humane and truly religious, we must be theists. But can we be Christians at the same time? There is no reason why we should not. Jesus himself, according to Voltaire, was a theist. But it was not the pure religion of Christ, "Love God with all thy heart and thy neighbor as thyself," which Voltaire found confronting him; it was Catholicism, with its dogmas, mysteries, symbols, articles of faith, relics of saints, sacred books, writings of Fathers of the Church, decisions of church councils, bulls of the popes. Can theism live in peace with a system so remote from natural religion? No doubt it can, being by nature peaceful and tolerant. It is the only sect which will never occasion any troubles in

a state. "Theists," says Voltaire, "are, with regard to the Christian religion, peaceful enemies it carries in its own bosom, who renounce it without trying to destroy it." But he is well aware that, to use Pascal's own words, the Christian religion holds atheism and deism in almost equal abhorrence and will not unresistingly suffer theism to be propagated. The conflict was therefore unavoidable. In the excitement of the contest Voltaire showed himself more and more violent. Not only are sacred books a subject of endless scoffing, and the dogmas attacked in a thousand ways in the name of reason; but Voltaire no longer admits that Christianity and theism can co-exist peacefully. One of the two must disappear, and it will not be theism. "I conclude," he writes, for instance, "that any sensible and righteous man cannot but abhor the Christian sect. The great name of theist, which is not revered as it ought to be, is the only name one should take. The only gospel we should read is the great book of Nature, written by the hand of God and stamped with His seal. The only religion one should profess consists in worshiping God and being a righteous man. It is as impossible for this pure and eternal religion to breed evil as it was for Christian fanaticism not to breed it." Fortunately we are beginning to contend with some success against superstition and dogma. "It seems that for the last fifty years reason, being introduced among us, has begun to destroy the pestilential germs which had so long infected the earth."

Voltaire speaks of the Christian dogma as Metternich was to speak afterward of the revolutionary spirit.

It is perhaps this criticism of positive religions and this theory of natural religion that have chiefly caused Voltaire to be looked upon in our days as a superficial and frivolous mind. It is certain that he understood very little of the history of religions, and his irrelevant taunts are extremely shocking. He does not even suspect that one must first try to enter with sympathy into the ideas and beliefs of men of other times, instead of condemning them offhand in the name of our own reason as absurd. However, his error, though palpable, may be explained by many more or less evident causes. First, there was his general tendency to construct the history of religions instead of learning it. We have already observed a similar tendency in Fontenelle, and we know that its remote source lies in the Cartesian spirit. With Voltaire in particular, it is related to the idea that "Nature is art." Just as the world is conceived to be an immense machine, built by the Supreme Maker, the whole body of beliefs which constitute a religion is looked upon as a work made with set purpose by law-givers and priests. Voltaire in considering the material universe does not take into account the spontaneous evolution due to natural forces and the finality residing in it; neither does he take them into account in the moral world.

But, one may say, the very notion he has of the

essence of religion is contrary to the most obvious observation. How can Voltaire maintain that dogma and worship are not essential elements in it, and that the whole of religion is comprised within a minimum number of rational beliefs joined to the practice of virtue? It is true that such a paradox in our days may seem without interest or value. But Voltaire, having entered upon a desperate contest with a religion which forced upon reason an incomprehensible creed, was naturally impelled to oppose to it a natural religion derived from reason itself and fully satisfying it; and if he presented this natural religion as more ancient than historical religions, it was because truth, being eternal, always preserves its birthright in spite of error which lasts but for a time.

Lastly, it is but fair in judging of works to view them from the standpoint of their author's principles, and not from our own. With the intellectual habits impressed upon us by our historical studies, we do not understand how anybody wishing to find out what religion is can dispense with observing how, in fact, religions were born, grew up, and died. But Voltaire thought he had a right to seek what religion *ought to be*. Likewise, we are now conscious above all of the historical variety of human races, customs, and religions. But French writers in the eighteenth century, Voltaire included, being therein the heirs of the great philosophers of the seventeenth century, dwelt chiefly on the fundamental identity of human nature and delighted

in discovering it through the diversity of times and places. Voltaire's theory of religion is in perfect accordance with this leading idea. It may appear obsolete, as are the very principles on which Voltaire grounded his statements, but it is not inconsistent.

This point settled, a new question arises: What is the use of religion in Voltaire's system? Theism at bottom is merely an expression of morals. This universal moral principle, according to him, forms part, so to speak, of the very nature of man. Why should it be linked to any religious belief? No doubt Voltaire says that his religion is "the most simple and easy," and contains "very little dogma"; yet it does contain some, and that is sufficient to admit all doubts raised by metaphysics. Voltaire himself confessed that belief in the existence of God presented difficulties. If "metaphysics is the romance of the mind," if between God and ourselves there is infinity, what right have we to make morals, the most clear and indispensable thing in the world, dependent upon belief in an inaccessible God?

But, Voltaire replies, belief in a God, creator of the world and principle of all good, is not to be confounded with the subtle notions of metaphysicians. It is as universal as ethics; it is produced with the same irresistible spontaneousness, when reason is ripe. Difficulties which arise afterward cannot shake this belief. It lies at the bottom of

all religions, and is the soul of truth. Therefore Voltaire brings the same zeal to the defense of this universal belief, sole dogma of natural religion, that he shows in combating the superstitions, the unintelligible dogmas and the bloody rites that have multiplied in particular religions.

Moreover, this belief is not only beneficial, but necessary. We cannot dispense with looking up to a retributive and avenging God. What other check could be put upon covetousness and hidden and unpunished transgressions than the idea of an Eternal Master who sees us and will judge even our inmost thoughts? Voltaire, in his turn, asks Bayle's well-known question: Can a society of atheists exist? Yes, he answers, if it be a sort of academy of refined and peaceful minds; no, if it be an ordinary political society. In all countries the lower classes need to be strongly curbed, and if Bayle had had but five or six hundred peasants to govern he would undoubtedly have proclaimed to them a retributive and avenging God. Voltaire here speaks like his friend, Frederick II. To the Encyclopædists, who think him timorous and overprudent, he replies by reminding them of political necessities. "Philosophize between yourselves as much as you please. I fancy I hear dilettanti giving for their own pleasure a refined music; but take good care not to perform this concert before the ignorant, the brutal, and the vulgar; they might break your instruments on your heads." In one

word: "Let a philosopher be a disciple of Spinoza if he likes, but let the statesman be a theist."

Therefore, a religion is necessary for the people. Voltaire says this quite seriously. That threw suspicion upon the sincerity of his theism. When he wonders how far politics will allow superstition to be destroyed, one may question whether "superstition" to him did not mean the belief in God which he himself preached. Is, then, this religion also double-dealing like the others? In what respect can the theist consider himself superior to priests if he also stoops to fool mankind, were it even for its own good? But Voltaire easily vindicates himself from the accusation of hypocrisy. He himself believes in God, and he thinks all people, whether philosophers or ignorant men, should do the same. Yet there remains one difference—i. e., that the philosopher's being an atheist has no serious consequence, whereas if "the populace" cease to believe in a retributive and avenging God the most frightful disorders may be expected. It is with this thought in mind that Voltaire goes so far as to compare the atheist to the fanatic. "Atheism and fanaticism are two monsters which may tear society to pieces." In this he exaggerates his thought, as is too often the case with him, by expressing it too strongly. His attention being fixed upon the social danger with which he wishes to impress his readers, he aims rather at striking hard than at striking straight. But here is a more

accurate expression of his meaning: "Teach this belief (in God); no mortal has any right to contradict you. You will say something which is *probable, and necessary to mankind.*"

From what has been said, it follows that the existence of a retributive and avenging God is indispensable to moral principles only in order to make them respected by the "brutal, the ignorant, and the vulgar." In fact, metaphysical discussions have but little influence on man's conduct. It is with these contests as with idle table-talk. After dinner every one forgets what he has said, and follows where his interests and tastes lead him. And one may be virtuous without believing in the existence of God or in the immortality of the soul. "Any sensible man, even though an unbeliever, will conclude that it is evidently to his interest to be an upright man. . . . Thus we observe that philosophers (who are called unbelievers and 'libertines') have in all times been the most upright people in the world. Those who must have recourse to religion in order to behave righteously are much to be pitied." Here Voltaire is very near agreeing with Bayle.

However, the basis of morality cannot lie in philosophical reflection, which is accessible only to a small number of thinkers. According to Voltaire it lies in the very essence of human nature. Reason, which is common to us all, teaches us, as soon as it is mature, the universal law of justice and

injustice. "Do thou unto others as thou wouldst have them do unto thee." This law cannot be torn away from the human heart, and as it is the foundation of morality, it is also that of society. Man is intended to live in society; he has therefore always lived thus, and the supposition of a state of nature previous and superior to the state of society is a vain fancy. Voltaire does not permit himself here to be influenced by Rousseau. In accordance with his own principle, "Man in general has always been what he is," he concludes that as the basis of society has always existed, there has always been some kind of society.

This is all the more certain as not only reason, but also man's inclination, makes him a sociable being. He is not like other animals that have only the instincts of self-love and of pairing. He has also a feeling of kindness toward his fellow-men. This feeling is born with us and is always at work in us unless combated by our self-love, which must needs always prevail over it. Voltaire therefore differs from Helvetius and other philosophers who would admit no original motive of our actions but self-love. He thinks altruism is no less natural than egotism. "We have," he says, "two feelings which are the basis of society: commiseration and justice. Let a child see its fellow-creature torn to pieces, he will feel a sudden pang." This altruism is not strong enough to withstand alone the violent assaults of selfish desires; but fortunately it happens that these very desires often contribute to the

preservation and progress of society. Passions are the main causes of the order we now behold upon earth. Pride above all is its chief instrument, but envy and covetousness also play a part in it. "Passions are the wheels that set all these machines in motion." One can see that Voltaire had read Mandeville.

It is likewise from a social point of view that he reaches his definition of virtue and vice. Moral good and evil in all countries are what is beneficial or hurtful to society; in all places and times he who makes the greatest sacrifices to the public is called the most virtuous. There is no absolute good or evil. These are relative notions like those of sweetness and bitterness. It follows that individual virtues are, strictly speaking, not virtues at all. What do I care whether you are temperate? You are observing a precept of health. You will feel the better for it, and I congratulate you. A recluse may be a saint, but I shall not call him virtuous till he has done a virtuous deed which is of some use to other men.

This moral philosophy, which leaped with one bound from the individual to mankind, could not but end in cosmopolitism; and, indeed, in the article *Patrie* of the *Dictionnaire philosophique*, Voltaire wrote a very sharp attack on patriotism. He pointed out that it is in most cases an artificial, selfish and hurtful feeling. He would leave to the heroes of Plutarch their conception of patriotism, and wished that the age of reason would unite all

separate countries into the one great *patrie* of humanity. Kant, Gœthe and Herder shared his opinions on this point, and nobody would have thought of calling them unpatriotic men on that account. Public opinion on the Continent was then leaning toward the humanitarian ideal extolled by the philosophers. If it became hostile to this ideal later on, it was under the pressure of events which obliged nations to fight for existence and roused in them a feeling of self-consciousness.

Again, the idea of humanity is the basis of Voltaire's philosophy of history. As early as 1737, in his *Conseils à un Journaliste*, he expressed the wish that a universal history should really correspond to its title, and that in it the whole of mankind should be studied. It would be desirable for Orientalists to give us outlines of the Eastern books. The public would not then be so totally ignorant of the history of the larger part of the globe; the pompous name of universal history would not be bestowed upon a few collections of Egyptian fables, of the revolutions of a country called Greece, not larger than Champagne, and of those of the Roman nation, which, vast and victorious as it was, never ruled over so many states as the people of Mahomet, and never conquered one-tenth of the world. Later on, in the preface to his *Essai sur les Mœurs*, he openly criticises Bossuet. He reproaches him with forgetting in universal history the universe itself, with mentioning only three or four nations, which have now disappeared from the

earth, with subordinating these three or four powerful nations to the insignificant Jewish people, which occupies three-fourths of his work, and lastly, with passing over Islam, India and China without a word. Voltaire wished to secularize universal history, which had been hitherto subordinate to theological dogma.

But his own conception of universal history remains practically incomplete, since what he knows of the history of the New World is next to nothing. And above all, he lacks a central principle that would enable him to understand this universal history in its unity. He can but repeat that "man has always been what he is." He implicitly believes in this uniformity of the species, which prevents him from understanding the little he knows of remote antiquity. Some of the religious rites of the Babylonians are offensive to our idea of morality. Voltaire does not hesitate to assume that historians lied in reporting them. The men that he sees everywhere are perfectly similar to those around him, though disguised, some as Greeks or Romans, others as Chinese, Persians, Turks or Hindoos. He sees everywhere the public credulous and deluded, and the world going on its usual way, at once tragic and ludicrous. His romances are the exact counterpart of the *Essai sur les Mœurs*. *Candide*, *Zadig*, *la Princesse de Babylone*, complete the idea of humanity given in Voltaire's historical works. He does not derive his knowledge of mankind from history; on the contrary, he transfers to

history the humanity that he already knows from observations of his contemporaries.

He does not, however, deny progress; but he has a most peculiar notion of it. The idea of slow and gradual evolution, of successive stages that must needs be traveled in order to reach a certain point, does not appear in his works. Progress, with him, does not consist in a law of development. It began less than a century before with the awakening of natural philosophy, and above all, with the enfranchisement of reason. No doubt antiquity possessed great thinkers, but it was nevertheless a prey to superstition. "There is not a single ancient philosopher who now serves to instruct young people among enlightened nations." As for the Middle Ages, he dispatches them in short order. "Imagine the Samoyeds and the Ostiaks having read Aristotle and Avicenna: this is what we were." Ignorance, misery, and theology; the whole of the Middle Ages is expressed in these three plagues, and Voltaire cannot tell which of the three is the worst. According to him, scholasticism, the wars of religion, the plagues, famines and *autos-da-fe* are all intimately related; and we are hardly yet rid of them. Witches had been condemned to the stake in Germany as late as the seventeenth century. There were still in France trials like that of Calas and La Barre. Therefore, when Voltaire speaks of the Middle Ages it is never in the tone of the historian; passion always intervenes. He is little acquainted with this period, but what he knows of

it is sufficient to make him loathe and despise it. Nor does he study it, being persuaded beforehand that such study would only confirm him in his feeling.

Is it surprising that Voltaire, being thus disposed, misapprehended the art of the Middle Ages, and was unaware of the grandeur of the age of Saint Louis, and of the prosperity of France before the Hundred Years' War, etc.? However, it seems we must also acknowledge that his prejudice did not prevent him from giving a picture which is often accurate of the general history of Europe since Charlemagne. And though the *Essai sur les Mœurs* may not be adequate to the idea of a philosophy of history, the very conception of the work was an original one, and many of the views expressed in it by Voltaire were fruitful for the historians who came after him.

This is not the proper place to speak of Voltaire as an economist, a criminalist and commentator of Beccaria, a writer on the theory of taste, and lastly, as the author of the *Questions sur l'Encyclopédie*, which manifest his eager curiosity regarding the most varied subjects. Though it is difficult to draw the line between his philosophy, properly so called, and the rest of his works, we must here content ourselves with stating his philosophical ideas in so far as they may be grouped into a system. Now, from all that we have said it appears that his princi-

ple is empiricism tempered by the idea of universality. Voltaire thinks, as Locke does, that nothing is given us beyond and independent of experience. But at the same time he is, perhaps unconsciously, faithful to the Cartesian tradition, and maintains that nothing is theoretically true or practically just unless it be universally accepted by reason. The union of these two elements is effected in the idea of *humanity*, which is both an empirical and a universal one. From this point of view, Voltaire's philosophy, in spite of its gaps and inconsistencies—which, by the by, are less serious than they are often said to be—offers a real unity. Science, morals, history, religion, politics, are all subjected by him to a criticism, which is sometimes hasty and partial, but which proceeds from an unchanging principle: To oppose to the products of an historical evolution which varies according to places and times and is often irrational and absurd, the standard of what is purely human and universally accepted by reason.

Thus, over against the positive religions, he sets up natural religion, which contains nothing but the human ideal of morality. The real name of Voltaire's God is Justice. It is a noble name. We may venture to believe that the great German philosophers of the end of the eighteenth century, influenced like everybody else by Voltaire's prestige, retained something of his thought on this point. No doubt the influence of Rousseau told

still more strongly upon them; no doubt they went more deeply into the ideas of experience, reason, justice, and truth, which Voltaire did not sufficiently analyze. But though he was too little of a philosopher to build a system as they did, he succeeded in spreading critical and humanitarian ideas all over Europe, and even in gaining for them a temporary ascendency.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ENCYCLOPÆDISTS.

VOLTAIRE was, indeed, in his tendencies, both confessed and secret, in his likes and his dislikes, in his good qualities and his defects, "the representative man" of French philosophy in the eighteenth century. We have therefore been obliged to give a somewhat detailed account of his doctrines, in which we find the average of the philosophical ideas professed by most of his contemporaries. Around him was arrayed an army of "philosophers," full of zeal but undisciplined and sometimes unruly, whose best lieutenants were the most independent. In spite, however, of the differences in their natures, tempers, aptitudes and talents, the public feeling was not mistaken in grouping them all together under one name, from La Mettrie to Condorcet, from Condillac to Abbé Raynal. Sometimes unthinkingly, but in most cases quite consciously, they worked together on a common task. Most of them used every exertion in combating the Roman Catholic Church, and in a general way Christianity itself. They rejected its conception of the universe and of man, which appeared to them false and superstitious; they condemned the social order which the Catholic hier-

archy contributed to maintain, and which they thought unjust and oppressive. Against this double tyranny all weapons were lawful. They would preserve nothing of this religion except its moral teaching, and even this they reduced to its essential elements, and held it to be human rather than specifically Christian.

In the constructive part of their work likewise, in spite of inevitable divergencies, they are quite akin to one another. Eager to lose no time in putting something in the place of that which they thought they had destroyed, they set to work with great haste, and their want of experience appears so constantly as to be almost monotonous. There is a continual recurrence of the same paradoxes, accepted without discussion, and of the same dubious formulæ looked upon as axioms. Their common stock consisted of a limited number of theories, often superficial and rudimentary, concerning psychology, morals, politics and history, and of certain ideas and views which were often both profound and fruitful—building stones, as it were, intended to fit into an edifice which they were as yet unable to erect. For the *Encyclopædia*, which they thought of as destined to be this edifice, represents a work-yard rather than a building. It has no unity, save in the spirit which animates it, and in the perseverance of Diderot, who, in spite of obstacles and at the cost of untold trouble and sacrifice, finally brought it to completion.

La Mettrie, by the date of his works, somewhat precedes the main body of the philosophical army. He died in 1751, four years before Montesquieu, and before Diderot, D'Alembert and Rousseau had produced their masterpieces. Being a disciple of Boerhaave, who sought to explain the phenomena of life by the mechanism of physical and chemical phenomena, being also acquainted, though somewhat superficially, with the doctrines of Descartes and Locke, he composed, with elements derived from widely different sources, a system which he thought scientifically proven. It was a kind of materialism, based on the idea which often reappeared in the course of the century, that the diversity in the orders of phenomena is due to the more or less complex organization of matter. As this organization is not the same in animals as in plants, nor (in certain points) in man as in animals, the functions which exist in plants, animals and in man must also be different; there is no need whatever of a special principle to explain certain of these functions rather than others. In opposition to spiritualistic dualism, which sets an abyss between the substance of the soul and that of the body, La Mettrie advanced, in his *Histoire Naturelle de l'Âme*, the ancient peripatetic and scholastic conception which makes of the soul the form of the body. Like some Aristotelians of the Renaissance, he slipped his own materialism into this theory. He openly expounded it in the *Homme-Machine*. While he praised Descartes for saying that an ani-

mal is a machine, he reproached him for not having dared to say the same of man. Not that La Mettrie denied the existence of feeling or thought in animals or in man; such a paradox would seem to him absurd. He means that feeling, thought, consciousness, are all produced by the machine; the whole soul is explained by it, depends upon it, and in consequence disappears when it gets out of order or is decomposed. As a physician he quotes in support of his theory definite facts borrowed from mental physiology and pathology, and he declares that he will accept as his judges none but scientific men, acquainted with anatomy and with the philosophy of the body.

La Mettrie's reputation in the eighteenth century was very bad. In our days some have tried to rehabilitate him. No doubt a philosopher may have been a declared materialist and atheist, have written insipid defenses of physical voluptuousness, and have died from eating too freely of patties, and yet may none the less have been a sincere man and have honestly sought after truth. No doubt also La Mettrie more than once served as a scapegoat for the philosophers who followed him and perhaps from time to time imitated him. The nearer they came to him the more fiercely they expressed their indignation against his abominable doctrines, for he, being dead, had nothing to fear either from the police or the parliament. His good name may have suffered from this maneuver. Yet if we examine his works closely, we shall conclude that he has not

been seriously wronged. He does not sufficiently distinguish between what is proved and what is merely asserted; he has no absorbing concern for close reasoning and exact expression, and his language is often rash in proportion to the looseness of his demonstrations. Let us grant that he introduced French materialism in the eighteenth century, but let us acknowledge at the same time that he too often presented it under an aggressive and unacceptable form.

In 1751 appeared the *Discours Préliminaire* of the *Encyclopædia*. Diderot had acted wisely in asking D'Alembert to write it, and in contenting himself with drawing up the prospectus of his great enterprise. He had already been at odds with the authorities, and had spent several months in Vincennes on account of his *Lettre sur les Aveugles;* in a word, he was looked upon as a suspicious character. D'Alembert, a great mathematician, renowned for his *Traité de Dynamique*, and a member of the Academy of Sciences, was just the man to present the *Encyclopædia* to the public, and his name insured it against the ill-will of the enemies of philosophy.

This discourse was much admired, but we now find it rather difficult to understand this admiration. Though we do not refuse our homage to the dignity of its tone and the elevation of its thought, we are rather disappointed as we read it. This is owing to several causes. Ideas which were new in those days have now become familiar and common-

place. Several important points in D'Alembert's philosophy do not appear in the *Discours*, or are merely hinted at. Others, on the contrary, are developed which do not express his real thought; but he believed this concession to be indispensable in order to gain acceptance for the rest. "In the accursed country in which we write," he said to Voltaire, "such phrases as these are notarial style, and serve only as passports for the truths that we wish to establish. Moreover, nobody is deceived by them. . . . Time will teach men to distinguish what we have thought from what we have said." D'Alembert never would deviate from this prudent course. Accordingly we see in the works offered to the public a D'Alembert whose attitude is irreproachable and whose irony is hidden under the forms of respect. But the letters to Voltaire and to Frederick the Great show us a quite different sort of man, eager for the fray, and as much incensed against parliaments, Jesuits, Jansenists, priests in general and religion as the most determined "philosopher."

Being a fervent admirer of Bacon, D'Alembert borrowed from him his classification of sciences, with a few alterations which he himself explains. To tell the truth, the *Discours Préliminaire* contains not one but three classifications of human knowledge, from three different points of view. D'Alembert first examines "the origin and development of our ideas and sciences from the philosophical or metaphysical—i. e., psychological—point of view."

Like a true disciple of Locke and Condillac, he divides all our knowledge into direct ideas and ideas derived from reflexion. Our direct knowledge is only that which has come to us through our senses; in other words, to our sensations alone do we owe our ideas. The classification here consists, therefore, in tracing our complex ideas back to simple ones—that is, to those derived from sensation.

The "encyclopædic order of sciences," which comes next, is a logical order. It must not be confused with the order which the human mind has actually followed in the production of the sciences. In all likelihood man, spurred on by his bodily wants, must first have set out to meet the most urgent needs, and then, as he met with difficulties, have tried another way, then have retraced his steps, etc. If so, the sciences which we look upon as containing the principles of all others, and which must come first in the encyclopædic order, were not the first to be developed. Moreover, in the historical order of the progress of the human mind, the various sciences can be viewed only in succession, one after another, whereas the encyclopædic order consists in embracing all sciences at one glance, as if from a height one should perceive at one's feet a maze of interweaving paths. Or, again, this encyclopædic order may be compared to a map of the world, on which we see at one glance the whole surface of the globe. And just as in preparing such a map we may choose among various systems

of projection, so we may also conceive the encyclopædic order in several different ways. None of these ways is necessarily to be adopted to the exclusion of all others, and if D'Alembert chose that of Bacon it was because, without being more defective than the others, it has the advantage of suggesting with tolerable accuracy the genealogy of human knowledge.

Lastly, a third order considered by D'Alembert is that according to which our sciences have been historically developed since the Renaissance. It differs from the order which the human mind would follow if left to its own lights. In this order, then, the sciences of erudition came first, owing to the prestige of antiquity, which after long ages of barbarism and ignorance was rising again fair and luminous before the delighted eyes of men.

Thus D'Alembert had a clear perception of the psychological genesis of our knowledge, of the logical order of the sciences, and of their historical succession. Could not these three orders have been combined to form a higher one? Comte later on attempted such a combination, but D'Alembert contented himself with a rapid criticism of each of the sciences, and a summary appreciation of the great minds who had created or developed them.

And, first of all, in the already formidable mass of our knowledge, how few branches deserve the name of sciences! History, according to D'Alembert, is in no wise entitled to it. It is only of practical interest. Why should we not, for instance,

cull from it the best catechism of morals that could be given to children, by collecting into one book the really memorable deeds and words? It would be particularly useful to philosophers and to the "unfortunate class" of princes, to teach them by what they learn of men who lived in former times to know the men with whom they live. Metaphysics should be strictly limited to what is treated of in Locke's *Essay*. Nearly all the other questions it proposes to solve are either beyond solution or idle. It is the food of rash or ill-balanced minds—in one word, a vain and contentious science. D'Alembert is not allured, like Voltaire, by the hypothesis which attributes to matter, under certain conditions, the power to think. To him it appears uncalled for and dangerous. If it inclines toward materialism, we fall back into a metaphysical doctrine no more clearly proven than any other. Is it not better for us to confess that we do not know at all what substance, soul and matter are? Likewise, as regards the existence and nature of God, skepticism is the only reasonable attitude of mind. And we should be compelled to say the same of the existence of the outer world and of man's liberty, did not instinct here supplement the deficiency of reason; whether the outer world exists or not, we have such a strong inclination to believe in it that everything appears to us as if it existed; and, in the same way, everything appears to us as if we were free.

Even in the natural sciences, how limited did

man's knowledge appear! Physiology had hardly yet begun to exist. Of medicine D'Alembert speaks as a man who has measured all its risks; in his eyes it is a purely empirical science. The physician who builds systems and clings to a theory is most dangerous; that one is least to be feared who has seen many patients and has learned to make an accurate diagnosis and not to dose at random. Physics is more advanced and its conquests are lasting. Here we stand on firmer ground, but progress is slow and the human mind has to guard against itself. D'Alembert insists upon the prudent advice already given by Bacon: we should distrust even the most probable explanations, so long as they have not been tested by experience, and if possible, by calculation.

Sciences in the highest sense of the word, D'Alembert called those he had been studying all his lifetime, and to which he owed the best of his glory—the mathematical sciences, which he divides into pure mathematics, mixed mathematics and physico-mathematical sciences. Certitude, properly so called, which is founded upon principles necessarily true and self-evident, does not belong equally or in the same way to all these branches of mathematics. Those which rest on physical principles, that is, on experimental truths or on physical hypotheses, have, so to speak, only an experimental or hypothetical certitude.

One might infer from this that D'Alembert looks upon pure mathematics, in opposition to physico-

mathematical sciences, as being really *a priori* and independent of experience. But how could he have harmonized such a conception with the principle borrowed from Locke, according to which all our knowledge comes, either directly or indirectly, from experience? D'Alembert did not fall into this contradiction. He avoided it by means of a theory of mathematics which was consistent with his sensationalistic principles, and much clearer than the ones to which Hume and Condillac resorted. Mathematics, in his opinion, belongs to natural philosophy. "The science of dimensions in general is the remotest term to which the contemplation of the properties of matter may lead us." Experience shows us individual beings and particular phenomena, the sun, the moon, rain and wind. By means of successive abstractions and of more and more comprehensive generalizations, we separate the qualities common to all these phenomena and beings, till at last we reach the fundamental properties of all bodies: impenetrability, extension and size. We cannot further subdivide our perceptions, and we find at this point a subject for sciences which, in virtue of the simplicity of this subject, may be made deductive. Thus, in geometry, we strip matter of nearly all its material qualities, and consider, so to speak, only its ghost. "Thus," says D'Alembert in language that foreshadows Stuart Mill, "it is merely by a process of abstraction that the geometrician considers lines as having no breadth, and surfaces as having no thick-

ness. The truths he demonstrates about the properties of all are *purely hypothetical* truths. But they are none the less useful, considering the consequences that result from them." This empirical theory of mathematics, which stands in such direct opposition to that of Plato and Descartes, has made its appearance again in our century, and is anything but abandoned at the present day. Even such men as Helmholtz, though reared under the influence of Kant, have deemed it indispensable to accept the statement that geometry contains elements derived from experience.

As the certainty of mathematics rests on the evidence of ideas so closely related that the mind perceives the connection between them at a glance, so the certainty of morals rests on the "heart's evidence" which rules us as imperiously. D'Alembert's theory of morals is almost entirely identical with Voltaire's. The only original feature about it is the personal accent that D'Alembert gives it, especially in his letters. To him sympathy for the hapless, indignation against the "monstrous inequality of fortunes" are not mere commonplaces, hackneyed expressions of a trite sentimentality, and homage paid to the reigning fashion. They are the words of a man who has seen the poor, who has lived among them, who has witnessed their sufferings, and to whom misery is a living reality, not a theme for literary amplification. D'Alembert goes so far as to ask himself whether, when driven to despair and reduced without fault of his own to

the verge of starvation, a man is morally bound to respect the surplus that another has beyond his needs.

In dignity of life and independence of character, as well as in genius, D'Alembert was among the glories of the party of philosophers. He more than once dared to contradict Voltaire. His friendship with Frederick never cost any sacrifice of his pride, and he fell out with Catherine of Russia because she rather haughtily rejected his intercession on behalf of some Frenchmen who had been taken prisoners in Poland. His two great passions were for mathematics and against "priests"; and it is characteristic of the times that the latter should have contributed no less than the former to constitute him a "philosopher."

Diderot was as adventurous, expansive and lyrical as D'Alembert was prudent, reserved and methodical. But his disorder is rich in ideas. Diderot was one of the most extraordinary mind-stirring writers that the world has ever seen. The brightness and charm of his conversation seem to have been prodigious. He was called "the philosopher." It must indeed be admitted that if we always meant by this word a man whose methodical and persevering meditation does not rest satisfied till it has found out a first principle from which it can deduce the whole world of reality, Diderot would occupy but a low place among philosophers. Not that he was incapable of reducing his ideas to

a system; but the starting-point of his attempts at such a synthesis was variable, depending on a chance encounter, conversation or reading. Before his reason went deep into things, his imagination had to be stirred. But on the other hand, he was without a rival in rising from an apparently insignificant point to general ruling principles, and in discovering from that vantage ground many roads, some of which led him to new points of view; his curiosity was indefatigable, his reflection sometimes profound and always suggestive.

Unfortunately, though all this be sufficient to exercise a considerable influence upon contemporaries, it may easily fail to produce many durable works. All Diderot's writings wear an air of improvisation, due to his ready and sudden enthusiasm, and to the facility with which he could put together *ex tempore* a vast structure of ideas. It can therefore hardly be said that the *Encyclopædia*, by compelling him to scatter his labors for twenty years upon an infinite and varied task, prevented him from bringing forth the great masterpiece which his intelligence, if concentrated, might have produced. It was rather because Diderot felt no strong desire to concentrate himself thus that he poured into the *Encyclopædia* and into a multitude of pamphlets his wonderful gifts for quick assimilation, and uninterrupted but fragmentary production.

Diderot was at first a deist, after the manner of Voltaire, and, like him, under the influence of the

English, particularly of Locke and Shaftesbury. He then thought, as did Voltaire, that modern physics had dealt materialism and skepticism a fatal blow. "The discovery of germs in itself has dispelled one of the strongest objections of atheism." But this style of philosophy soon ceased to satisfy him, and he gradually inclined to what he himself called the most attractive form of materialism—that which attributes to organic molecules desires, aversions, feeling and thought—to end at last in a sort of pantheistic naturalism.

Several paths led Diderot to this goal. First of all, he perceived that the irreducible dualism of soul and body was generally upheld for religious quite as much as for philosophical reasons; and this alone was sufficient to drive him away from it. Then, in his *Lettre sur les Aveugles* and *Sur les Sourds Muets*, he insists upon the relative character of our metaphysical conceptions. For a blind man, what becomes of the proof of the existence of God based upon final cases? Diderot attempted, as Condillac did afterward, to work out the psychological development of sensationalism. All our knowledge comes from the senses; how does it come from them? What do we owe to each of our senses? Can we analyze their data, and afterward from them reconstruct the whole? Cheselden's experiment and Molyneux's problem were known; Diderot wished to go beyond these, to carry this kind of "metaphysical anatomy" still farther, and to take in pieces, so to speak, the senses of man.

He imagined the "conventional mute," and the conclusions that he drew from his psychological analysis alarmed many a Christian.

But Diderot's pantheistic tendencies seem to have been chiefly determined by the discoveries made about this time in natural science. These he followed with passionate interest, and his imagination soon swept him on to bold hypotheses concerning life and thought. "We are," he says, "on the verge of a great revolution in science." In mathematics such men as Bernoulli, Euler, D'Alembert, Lagrange, have "set the pillars of Hercules." Nobody will go further. The natural sciences, on the other hand, have only just been born; and already the little that is known about them entirely changes our view of the world. For instance, to a mathematician studying abstract mechanics a body may undoubtedly, by convention, be looked upon as inert; but if we examine the facts, the inertia of bodies is a "fearful error," contrary to all sound principles of physics and chemistry. In itself, whether we consider its particles or its mass, a body is full of activity and strength. The distinction between inorganic and living matter is therefore superficial, and strictly speaking, even false; for do we not plainly see that the same matter is alternately living and not living, according as it is assimilated or eliminated by a plant or an animal? Nature makes flesh with marble, and marble with flesh. Therefore, is it not very rash to assert that sensibility is incompatible with matter, since we do

not know the essence of anything whatever, either of matter or of insensibility? But, it is said, sensibility is a simple quality, one and indivisible, and incompatible with a divisible subject. "Metaphysico-theological gibberish," answers Diderot. Experience show that life is everywhere; who knows but feeling may be everywhere, too?

One of the most serious objections raised against such a doctrine rests on the stability and permanence of living species, which seem to set an insurmountable barrier between man and other animals, between any two living species, and above all, between the realm of life and that of inorganic matter. Diderot was aware of this difficulty. He answered it by asserting the natural evolution of all the species that ever appeared on the globe. It does not follow because of the present state of the earth, and consequently of the living species and of the inanimate bodies which are to be found thereon, that this state has always been similar in the past, or is to remain similar in the future. What we mistake for the history of nature is only the history of an instant of time. Just as in the animal or vegetable kingdom an individual begins to exist, grows, matures, decays and disappears, may it not be the same with an entire species? Who knows what races of animals have preceded us? And who knows what races of animals will succeed ours? Let us then waive the apparently unanswerable question of the origin of life. If you are puzzled by the question of the egg and the owl, it is because

you suppose animals to have been originally what they are now. What folly! We do not know what they have been any more than we know what they are to be.

To Diderot's eager, universal and insatiable scientific curiosity was joined a conception of science itself which might already be termed "positivism." We know little; let us be contented with what we can know. Our means of gaining knowledge reach as far as our real needs do, and where these means are denied us, knowledge is probably not very necessary for us. I might as well feel seriously grieved at not having four eyes, four feet, and two wings. We must accept the fact that we are as we are, and not aspire to a science that would be beyond our comprehension. If men were wise, they would at last give their attention to investigations that would promise to promote their comfort, and no longer deign to answer questions which are idle because they are unanswerable. For a similar reason they would cease to aim at a greater degree of precision in science than practical considerations demand. In a word, "utility is the measure of everything." Utility will a few centuries hence set limits to experimental physics, as it is on the point of doing with regard to geometry. "I will allow centuries to this study (physics), because its sphere of utility is infinitely wider than that of any other abstract science, and because it is unquestionably the basis of our real knowledge."

The same fervent love of humanity which ani-

mates and limits Diderot's idea of science, is also to be found in his polemics against the Christian religion. Of course his language varied according to circumstances. When he did not intend to publish he gave free rein to his bold tongue. In this way he wrote the *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville*, *Le Neveu de Rameau* (his masterpiece), the *Entretien avec la Maréchale de* . . . . In private letters he sometimes vents his rage in invectives against that religion, "the most absurd and atrocious in its dogmas, the most unintelligible, metaphysical and intricate, and consequently the most liable to divisions, schisms and heresies, the most fatal to public peace and to sovereigns, the most insipid, the most gloomy, the most Gothic, the most puerile, the most unsociable in its morals, the most intolerant of all." In the *Encyclopædia* he makes a show of respect. Yet significant sallies will sometimes escape him: "The Hebrews knew what Christians term the true God; as if there were any false one!"

His ethics, extremely lax as regards the union of the sexes, is unfortunately influenced by the lachrymose sentimentality of the times. The moment that virtue is mentioned Diderot gets excited. Tears come into his eyes, his heart throbs, he gasps, he must embrace his friends, and they must share his transports. This overflow of feeling seriously impairs the precision of his ideas. Diderot taught his daughter that every virtue has two rewards: the pleasure of doing good, and that of winning the good

will of others; and every vice has two punishments: one in our inmost hearts, the other in the feeling of aversion which we never fail to excite in others. He wished her to have no prejudices, but to have morals and principles "common to all centuries and nations." Here we recognize ideas dear to Voltaire. Like him, also, Diderot considered that justice was rooted in the very nature of man, and not, in spite of Locke, variable according to times and places. "The maxims engraved, so to speak, on the tables of mankind are as ancient as man and preceded his laws, for which they ought to furnish the guiding principles." But Diderot, in accord here with Rousseau, added that nature has not created us wicked, and that it is bad education, bad examples and bad legislation that deprave us.

The originality of Diderot must not therefore be sought in his ethics; it lies elsewhere, in the mass of ideas set in motion by this indefatigable mind, a real precursor on many points of the present century, which has justly shown a predilection for him. He anticipates the progress of the natural sciences and the change they were to bring to the general conception of the universe, and consequently to the whole life of mankind. He was among the first to recognize the social importance of the mechanic arts, by giving them the place they were entitled to in the *Encyclopædia*. He raised in public esteem the men who practice these arts, and thus did for the workman what the physiocrats were at the same time doing for the husbandman. At the same time

his *Salons* were making the beginnings of art criticism, and teaching his contemporaries how to look at pictures and statues. On dramatic art and the art of the comedian he brought forward many ingenious and profound ideas — and finally he revealed in many articles of the *Encyclopædia* a searching knowledge of the history of philosophy, then neglected and almost unknown in France.

Goethe, who greatly admired him, said that his was "the most Germanic of French heads." Indeed very few French philosophers have had as keen a sense of the great pulse of universal life and of the creative power of nature, or as sound and penetrating an insight into manifold reality. He occupies a special place, which we must almost despair of defining in a satisfactory manner. We can neither set forth his philosophical thoughts without exhibiting their shortcomings, nor yet point out these drawbacks without running the risk of being unjust to this vast, powerful and unrestrained genius.

Even as compared with lesser men than D'Alembert and Diderot, Helvetius is not the most original of the "philosophers," yet his book, *De l'Esprit*, created a wonderful sensation, both in France and abroad. This success was partly due, at least in France, to the personality of the author, who was a great financier and a kind, generous, hospitable and friendly man, who approached very near to the most esteemed type of man of the eighteenth century: the man of feeling who is virtuous and made

happy by his virtue. The success was undoubtedly also due in part to a captivating style; easy to read, composed with a manifest concern for the favor of women, and weaving in short stories and anecdotes *De l'Esprit* did not repel even the most indolent reader. Lastly, its success was due to the apparent boldness of the paradoxes, which however were nothing but the fashionable opinions carried to their logical conclusions. The strange thing was that the success of Helvetius lasted for a long time, and at the end of the century it was still thought worth while to refute him.

Apart from the current doctrine of sensationalism, for which Helvetius was evidently indebted to Condillac or to some other contemporary writer, his two main paradoxes are the following: (1) That personal interest or the pursuit of happiness is the only principle, whether confessed or not, of human actions; (2) that education can do everything. The first paradox was not new. Many a moralist, not to mention La Rochefoucauld, had already shown the infinite cunning of self-love, and concluded that men, even in the actions that seem most disinterested actions, are always more or less hypocritical. But Helvetius gives his argument a quite different turn. There is no pessimism or bitterness about him; he is full of kindness. "It was not the love of paradoxes," he writes, "that led me to my conclusion, but solely a desire for men's happiness." And he flatters himself that his doctrine may contribute to it. Indeed, if it be once granted that

man never seeks anything but his own interest, let law-givers so contrive that the general interest shall always agree with private interests, and all men will be good and happy. Everything, therefore, depends upon the laws. Wherever private interest is identified with public interest, virtue in each individual becomes the necessary effect of self-love and personal interest. "All the vices of a nation almost invariably originate in some defects of its legislation."

Diderot justly observed that this omnipotence attributed to the laws repeats in an exaggerated form the conception of Montesquieu, who saw an inseparable connection between morals and the system of government, and thus attributed to political laws an influence not always confirmed by experience. Furthermore, with Montesquieu the forms of government depend, in their turn, upon climate and a multitude of conditions, whereas Helvetius expressly opposes Montesquieu's theory of climates. He maintains that the action of the law-giver is supreme everywhere, and that no obstacles are insuperable if this action be properly directed. If it be objected that the pursuit of personal interest is rather a narrow basis to sustain the whole edifice of human society, he answers that as all things come from experience, the feeling which was afterward to be called altruism is no exception to the rule. The *moral instinct*, the moral sense, the natural capacity for beneficence and benevolence, appealed to by the English, are not to be admitted.

"The vaunted system of the morally beautiful is really nothing but the system of innate ideas, demolished by Locke, and brought forward again under a somewhat different form." No individual is born good, no individual is born wicked. Both goodness and wickedness are accidents, being the result of good or bad laws.

Thence logically follows the second paradox, according to which education alone creates differences among men. Since nothing is innate or hereditary, every human soul is at first a blank page, and all souls are identical at birth. Inequality among minds is therefore due to the various circumstances in which men have been placed, to the passions aroused by these circumstances, to the power of attention that these passions produce, in short, to a thousand causes, but above all to education. Pedagogy is to individuals what political science is to nations. Error is an evil which, like vice, may be avoided. To insure the happiness of mankind, it will only be necessary to bring the art of education to perfection. Education will make enlightened men and even "men of genius as numerous as they have hitherto been scarce." The enormity of the paradox did not prevent its making an impression upon the public. It had at least the merit of calling attention to the then quite new science of pedagogy, and of preparing the public to welcome Rousseau's *Émile*. Besides, the influence of Rousseau was already quite perceptible in Helvetius. "Everything is acquired" is, indeed, accord-

ing to Locke's conception, the negation of innate ideas; but it is also, according to Rousseau's conception, the assertion that the errors, sufferings and crimes of men are their own work, and that it is for the educator and the law-giver to cure them.

Le Système de la Nature, by Baron D'Holbach, which appeared in 1770, is a less superficial and more vigorous work than the writings of Helvetius. Being a confessed materialist, D'Holbach defines man as a material being, organized so as to feel, think and be modified in certain ways peculiar to himself—that is, to the particular combinations of substances of which he is composed. The intellectual faculties may be reduced to changes produced by motion in the brain. The word "spirit" has no meaning. The savages admit the existence of "spirits" to explain effects for which they cannot account, and which seem to them marvelous. Such an idea of spirit is preserved only by ignorance and sloth. It is more useful to divines, but most harmful to the progress of society, which keeps pace with science. The immortality of the soul is a religious dogma which never was of any use except to priests, and is not even a check upon the passions if they are at all violent, as experience sufficiently proves. And as necessary laws govern all natural phenomena, intellectual and moral phenomena included, moral freedom is quite out of the question.

So far this materialism had nothing remarkable about it unless it be its perfect frankness. But on

the question of the existence of God, D'Holbach subjected deism and theism to a searching criticism, obviously directed against Voltaire's natural religion, and worthy of some notice. People make a wrong use of physics in behalf of metaphysics, says D'Holbach, and the study of nature should have nothing to do with moral or theological interests lest a new chance of errors be added to all those we already have to guard against. But even if we overlook this point, the argument based on final causes does not prove what it is thought to prove. First of all, the idea of order is relative to human canons of propriety, and if we leave these out of account, disorder is in itself no less natural and normal than order, nor illness than health; all phenomena being produced by virtue of the same laws. Then "to be surprised that the heart, the brain, the arteries, etc., of an animal should work as they do, or that a tree should bear fruit, is to be surprised that an animal or a tree should exist." What we call finality is but the total sum of the conditions required for the existence of every being. When these conditions are found combined, the living being subsists; if they cease to be so, it disappears; and this very simple proposition, which is true as regards individuals, is no less so as regards species and even suns. There is nothing in this which compels us to have recourse to a Providence, the author and maintainer of the world's order.

The divine personality, upheld by theists, is untenable. Newton, the vast genius who divined

Nature and its laws, is only a child when he leaves the domain of physics; and his theology shows that he had remained in bondage to the prejudices of his childhood. What is that God, lord and sovereign of all things, who rules the universe, but an anthropomorphic conception, which was only a reminiscence of Newton's Christian education? And what is Voltaire's retributive and vengeful God but a reminiscence of precisely the same kind?

The deists' God is useless, the theists' God is full of contradictions. If we nevertheless accept him, we have no right to reject anything in the name of reason, and we are inconsistent if we refuse to go further and to submit to religious dogma. Theism is liable to as many heresies and schisms as religion, and is, from a logical point of view, even more untenable. So there will always be but a step "from theism to superstition." The least derangement in the machine, a slight ailment, some unforeseen affliction, are sufficient to disturb the humors, and nothing more is required. Natural religion is only a variety of the other kind of religion, and speedily comes back to the original type. It is fear and ignorance of causes that first suggested to man the idea of his gods. He made them rude and fierce, then civilized, like himself; and nothing bnt science can cause this instinctive theology to disappear.

The appearance of this book, in which the author (though under an assumed name) so boldly carried his principles to their utmost logical conclusions, created great commotion among the "phi-

losophers." Though they did not all feel indignant, they nearly all thought it advisable to simulate indignation. Voltaire strongly protested, and this time he was sincere. Diderot, who was suspected of having had a hand in the work, kept very quiet. D'Alembert confessed that the *Système de la Nature* was a "terrible book." Frederick II, very much shocked, wrote a refutation of it. He clearly perceived the revolutionary ideas lurking in it, and became out of humor with the Encyclopædists, who were friends and intimates of Baron D'Holbach. As for Rousseau, he had already broken with them long before, and had not waited for this book before opening the battle against materialism and atheism, which he "held in abhorrence."

Nevertheless Rousseau had contributed to the *Encyclopædia* in the first years of its publication; Condillac, Turgot, Quesnay had likewise written articles for it, and unfortunately other men besides, who were unworthy of such neighbors. In spite of Diderot's efforts there are strange incongruities in the *Encyclopædia*, and we easily understand Voltaire's frequent indignation at the vapid or high-flown nonsense which Diderot was compelled to insert. D'Alembert, who ceased in 1757 to be associated with him in publishing the *Encyclopædia*, though he went on contributing to it, often pleads extenuating circumstances in his Letters to Voltaire. It was he who, in his *Discours Préliminaire*, gave perhaps the best characterization of this undertaking in which the philosophical spirit of the age

found its expression: "The present century," he said, "which thinks itself destined to alter laws of all kinds and to secure justice . . . "

The philosophers proceeded to "alter the laws" with an eagerness, a confidence in their own reason and in their paradoxes and a power of self-delusion that were extraordinary. The government they controlled existed only in imagination, and there was no check of experience to bring them to a halt in time. The work which they did too hastily now seems to us rather poor and out of proportion to their claims; but it does not follow that this work was not necessary, or that they were wrong in undertaking it. On the contrary, their impulse on the whole was generous, and for this reason, in spite of all their failings, it proved irresistible and carried away the very men who ought to have been its natural adversaries. Hatred of falsehood, superstition, oppression, confidence in the progress of reason and science, belief in the power of education and law to overcome ignorance, error and misery, which are the sources of all our misfortunes, and lastly warm sympathy for all that is human were shed abroad from this focus to the ends of the civilized world. Events followed which left an indelible mark upon history. And though a clear-sighted reaction showed the weaknesses, inconsistencies and lapses of this philosophy, it may well be believed that its virtue is not yet quite exhausted, and that by laying its foundations deeper it may yet rise again with new strength.

CHAPTER VIII.

JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU.

ROUSSEAU'S personality exhibits so much complexity, and yet at the same time so much unity, that it is no easy thing to study in him the philosopher apart from the man of letters. His philosophical tenets are the very soul of his talent as a writer. They are not merely the result of his mind's reflections upon the great problems, but rather of his heart's inmost tendencies. Rousseau the philosopher is Rousseau's entire self. Yet this very fact gives to his philosophical doctrine, if we try to examine it separately, a certain character of unity. His solutions of the essential questions are in harmony with one another, and it is not impossible to discover the general principles from which all the rest springs.

The chief philosophical problem, according to Rousseau, is the moral problem from the two-fold point of view of the individual and of society. He feels but little curiosity for theoretical questions, properly so called. Though a subtle and sometimes rigorous dialectician, it never occurs to him to reflect upon logic. Exact sciences have but little interest for him. The strong liking for botany which he manifested in his later years came from

an æsthetic, and in a certain sense religious, feeling. On the other hand, everything relating to man's conduct and destiny moved him deeply. He was led to philosophical reflection by the discomfort, suffering and often indignation bred in him either by his intercourse with other men, or by the sight of men's intercourse with one another. Morals, institutions and beliefs all hurt him, and appeared to him false and different from what they should be. Whence comes it that the immense majority of men are sunk in poverty, in order to maintain in luxury the few who in their turn suffer from having no rule of life and nothing more to desire? Whence comes it that the weak and the powerful are equally dependent upon one another, and equally unhappy? Why do we find lurking beneath the apparent refinement and mildness of manners the cold rage of envy, base covetousness, desperate pursuit of personal interest, indifference to public good, hardness of heart and cruelty? Why does the development of arts and sciences, notwithstanding the excellence of a few individuals, seem to have made mankind worse and more miserable still? And lastly, why is hypocrisy universal, making it pos for Rousseau to appear original merely beca said what was as clear as daylight to e In short, to reduce all these qu tial ones, is it necessary th be what they are? of their bein be brought

To the first of these two questions there is a very simple answer, supplied by Christian theology: Man fell though sin. His nature is corrupt, and it is not a surprising thing that what springs from such a nature should be corrupt also. Rousseau did not content himself with this appeal to mystery. Had he done so, he might have been a more orthodox Christian, but his effect upon his contemporaries would have been far less great, and he might have had none whatever. How could the theological solution be proposed again to minds feverishly longing for enfranchisement, and impatient to apply reason to the treatment of those subjects which theology had kept to itself for so many centuries? And then, had he borrowed his argument from the doctrine of the fall of man, what could he have said on morals that had not been well said already by Nicole and Malebranche? Instead of simply taking human perversity as a fact, Rousseau, by a stroke of genius, set himself to the study of its genesis. Instead of supposing it to be innate, he sought to discover how it was acquired. "All you can see is man in the hands of the Devil," he writes to the Archbishop of Paris; "but I see how he came [illegible]. The cause of evil, according to you, is [illegible]rupt nature; but this corruption is itself [illegible]ght to have been done was to [illegible]gree that man was cre-[illegible]ed because he has [illegible]he came to [illegible]sseau, the

dogma of original sin is not so much a solution as a statement of the problem. He attempted to supply a real solution and to offer an explanation instead of a dogma.

The undertaking was a bold one, and characteristic of the age which asserted that in man "everything is acquired," and which, in its desire to set the individual man wholly free from all sense of solidarity with his fellows, except in so far as he himself freely accepted it, endeavored with Condillac and Helvetius to belittle and even to deny the influence of heredity. In the same way, Rousseau attacked the formidable problem of the origin of evil in the human soul, still unsolved save in religious metaphysics, without stopping to ask himself whether it was not beyond the reach of his reason. That reason set the problem, was for him sufficient ground for believing that reason was capable of solving it. Though Rousseau was an adversary of the philosophers and out of patience with their misuse of reason, it did not occur to him, any more than to them, to submit reason itself to criticism and to measure its power.

The search for the genesis of moral and social evil implies that man was once innocent and good. If we thus admit a "contradiction" (a word Rousseau was wont to use with the meaning of "opposition") between man's primitive nature and our social order, we shall see that it is sufficient to explain all the vices of men and the evils of society.

But it is no light task to discern what is original and what is artificial in the present nature of man. How can we know his "primitive state, which exists no longer, may never have existed, will probably never exist again, but of which we must, nevertheless, have some precise notions in order to judge rightly of our present state?" We see that Rousseau does not for a moment claim for his researches the character of historical investigations. He makes no pretension to anthropological science. He does not even seek to discover what primitive man may actually have been. The genesis he undertakes to seek is an analytical one, like those, attempted in psychology by Diderot, Condillac and Buffon, to which the public had given a very favorable reception. Just as Condillac, in tracing our knowledge back to its first elements, did not have recourse to direct observation, but by a sort of ideal analysis, eliminated in imagination all the senses save one, in order to establish the special data of that one, after which he brought back the other senses one by one, so Rousseau proceeds, as he himself says, by means of "hypothetical and conditional" reasoning. He first considers the nature of man as he now is, and determines all that may be explained by the influence of social intercourse, of surroundings, education, etc. Then, suppressing all that is thus explained, he infers that what remains must have been the original nature of man.

Those who objected that Rousseau's "man in a state of nature" had never existed, failed therefore

very egregiously to understand him. It is as if one should object that Condillac's animated statue never existed. Rousseau's method is quite a psychological one. It was "by meditating upon the first and simplest operations of the soul" that he endeavored to deduce the feelings and ideas of the natural man. Nature, whose voice cannot be completely hushed, was to tell him by means of an inward feeling, whether his hypotheses were acceptable. He had in her a means, if not of verification, at least of control.

In order to separate at once from man's present nature all that the successive generations have acquired in the course of the centuries, Rousseau supposes the original man to have lived alone. Even the family did not yet exist; it was a first revolution that brought about the establishment of families and the distinctions between them. Originally man did not live in society any more than wolves and monkeys do; he occasionally joined his fellow creatures, but usually kept aloof from them. He was an animal, inferior in certain respects to some, but upon the whole superior to all others. His body was robust, and mainly unacquainted with other ills than wounds and old age. The innumerable diseases to which civilized man is a prey were unknown to men in a state of nature; moreover, as the sway of natural selection was undisputed among them, every weak and deficient individual, not being able to get beyond childhood,

was eliminated at the outset. As regards his mind, his first state, in common with all animals, must have been that of simple perception and feeling; to will and to be unwilling, to desire and to fear—these must have been the first and almost the only operations of his soul. He felt no curiosity, and his mind stagnated indefinitely. As he wandered through the forests, without industry and without speech, neither at war with his kind nor bound by any ties to them, having no need of his fellow-creatures and at the same time no desire to harm them, he had only so much feeling and enlightenment as belongs to such a state; there could be no education and no progress. The species was already old, and man remained still a child. His only passion was the love of his own person (not self-love, which supposes a distinction between personal interest and the interest of others—that is, of society). He had a natural inclination to pity, when he beheld one of his fellow-beings in distress.

But this harmless animal, apparently so nearly like the others, had that within him which could create between him and them an almost boundless difference. He was "perfectible." He possessed the potentiality of reason, and of everything that comes in its train—language, civil society, morality and progress. The difficulty is to understand how the solitary man became sociable, and what started that extraordinary evolution of which modern societies are the outgrowth. Rousseau confesses that the transition puzzles him; he has recourse to "the

spur of necessity," to the presence of want, occasioned apparently by the increase of population. How did man begin to think? "The more we meditate upon this subject, the greater the distance between pure sensations and the most simple form of knowledge" appears. And how are we to explain the origin of language? Rousseau thinks the problem insoluble: he does not know which was the more indispensable prerequisite for the creation of the other—a society already in operation or a language already invented.

Having reached this point, the author sketches a sort of hypothetical pre-history, in which man, having once left the state of nature behind him, is constantly led on to new inventions by new wants. His intelligence and sensibility developed, the family is constituted, and groups of families are formed; common tradition, knowledge and beliefs are established. Finally, when the last traces of the state of nature are obliterated, the idea of property appears. This idea, dependent as it is upon many other previous ideas, which could have arisen only one after another, was not formed all at once in the human mind; many improvements had to be made and much industry and enlightenment to be acquired before it could occur to men.

Property implies the organization of civil society, of penal justice and the legal recognition of inequality. Henceforth there must be rich men and poor men; and by a prodigious piece of dexterity, those who have possessions have managed to get

their wealth insured and protected by those who have none. Soon there will be powerful men and weak men, and in the end masters and slaves. Inequality thus reaches its last stage. In the state of nature men were all equal, save for a few physical differences, since they all led the same peaceful and solitary life. In the present state some are starving, while others are wallowing in superfluous wealth, and all become crafty, jealous and wicked.

But, one might object, was it not by virtue of his very nature that man developed his reason and gradually formed the family, property and civil society? If the social man existed as a germ or potentiality within the original man, is it fair to oppose them to each other? Rousseau forestalled the objection. Such an evolution, he says, was not inevitable. It might possibly not have taken place. Nature had but meagerly endowed men for sociability. She had very little share in all that they did to make fast its bonds. She had made him rather for solitude. Perfectibility, social virtues and all other potentialities which the natural man had received could never have developed of themselves; they needed the chance conjunction of several causes which might never have occurred; man would then have remained forever in his primitive condition. But when once this evolution had begun, and above all, when once society had been established, every step taken brought man farther from his original type.

Thus the long toil of civilization, which gave us

arts, sciences and industry, also brought upon us diseases, misery, sufferings of all kinds, and especially vices. Society is an assemblage of artificial men, preyed upon by factitious though only too real passions, for which in the primitive state there was no occasion. Therefore, if man's nature is now corrupted, we must not infer therefrom that it has always been so. This corruption is his own work, and the ransom to be paid for his release from savagery.

Thus did Rousseau solve the first problem he had set himself, and trace the genesis of social evil. Where are we to seek a remedy for it? This remedy, if it exists, can be found only in a system of education that would rehabilitate man depraved by the morals and institutions of to-day. But such a system of education implies a whole system of philosophy, for it presupposes a thorough knowledge of man's nature, of the laws of his mental development, of his private and public intercourse with his fellow-creatures, of his place in nature, of his future destiny, and lastly of the first cause of all things. This philosophy Rousseau was to undertake, and the idea of "nature" as opposed to everything fictitious or conventional, was to be the clew that he followed in his researches.

Though an adversary of the "philosophers," Rousseau had at first been their friend, and to a certain degree their disciple. We have observed that the influence of Condillac and Diderot had left

upon him a lasting impression. If he fell out with them and began combating them, it was because the doctrines in which they delighted were most revolting to him. At the outset and before arguing the matter at all he was thoroughly convinced that these doctrines could not be true. He felt sure of this from the feeling of repulsion they aroused within him, a feeling as spontaneous and irresistible as an instinct. Afterwards he sought reasons for it, but these justified his certitude and did not add to it. "Not only am I not a materialist," he wrote towards the latter part of his life, "but I do not even remember having been tempted for an instant to become one." Goethe, in a celebrated passage of his *Memoirs*, has depicted in striking terms the impression of repugnance and disgust produced upon him by the book of Baron D'Holbach; these were the very feelings of Rousseau. Materialism—that is, in the language of the time, the philosophy of the Encyclopædists when they speak out their minds—needs only to be stated in order to be refuted. The heart rejects it, conscience condemns it, and from this verdict there is no appeal. It matters little that its deductions appear to be closely reasoned. "When a philosopher tells me that trees feel and rocks think, it will be in vain for him to beguile me with his subtle arguments; I can see in him but a disingenuous sophist, who would rather give feeling to stones than grant a soul to man."

Most certainly, were demonstration possible in

such matters, we should have to keep to truths that are proved; but the extraordinary variety of doctrines is sufficient to show that none of them is evident. Philosophers only multiply the causes for doubt. The more we read them the less we are able to come to a conclusion. Their whole art consists in giving the appearance of truth to paradoxes which one is at first tempted to reject without examination. Are we, then, to suspend our judgment indefinitely? But this I cannot do, says Rousseau. Doubt is too violent a state for my soul. My soul longs to be convinced and thirsts after belief. It takes a serious view of life, and therefore it must know what life is. Since the philosophers cannot tell me, I will inquire elsewhere. "Let me consult the inward light; it will not lead me so far astray as they do, or at least the error will be mine, and I shall be less depraved if I trust to my own illusions than if I am led away by their lies." This inward light is "natural," whereas philosophers nearly always come to conclusions extremely remote from what nature suggests to us. They seem to take pleasure in adopting the reverse of what the majority of men think and believe. This, according to Rousseau, is at once a token of pride and a risk of error. The first and most common notion is also the simplest and most sensible, and often would only need to be the last proposed in order to win universal approbation.

Metaphysical truth is therefore accessible to all men, but to the philosopher less than to any other

on account of his taste for abstruse researches and difficult solutions. A simple and sincere man will trust to natural light and be content with the convictions it furnishes him. Thus, whatever Locke may say to the contrary, I need to know of matter only that it has extension and divisibility to feel assured that it cannot think. Matter in itself seems to me indifferent to motion and rest. Therefore it has in itself no power to act. "If it acts, it is because either motion or life has been communicated to it." With still better reason shall I refuse to admit that feeling and thought depend simply upon a certain organization of matter. "I have earnestly endeavored to conceive the existence of a living particle, but without success. The idea of sentient matter that has no senses appears to me unintelligible and contradictory. In spite, therefore, of all arguments (no doubt those set forth by Diderot in *Le Rêve de D'Alembert*, which Rousseau must have heard from the author's lips), I shall persist in believing that the soul is a substance distinct from the body."

If matter is essentially inert, the soul, on the contrary, is essentially active. Sensationalism seeks to reduce this activity as much as possible. It is not contented with saying that whatever enters our understanding comes by the way of our senses; this Rousseau admitted, as did all men of his time; it furthermore asserts that all operations of the mind may be reduced to sensation. Even judgment would seem to be only a comparison between

two sensations, a comparison not made by the mind, but produced in it. It would never be produced, answers Rousseau, if the mind had not an active part in the operation. "In my opinion the distinctive faculty of the active and intelligent being, is that he can attach a meaning to the word 'is.' I seek in vain in the being of pure sensation this intelligent force which first compares and then judges." Rousseau did nothing more than point out this theory of judgment, but he no doubt touched here one of the weak points of his adversaries.

The same method was used by Rousseau concerning the existence of God. Here again he begins by criticising the materialists. Matter is inert. To account for the motion of the universe we therefore need an intelligent motive power. How does this force move matter? I do not know, and the probability is that I shall never know. But am I better acquainted with the soul's way of moving the body? Yet I cannot doubt that it does move it.

The proof taken from final causes appeals to Rousseau still more strongly than the proof taken from the necessity of a moving cause. The spectacle of nature, and above all, the sight of organized beings, delighted him. He compares the special ends of every species, its means for attaining them, and the order of its settled relations, and the "inward testimony" tells him that all this would not exist if supreme wisdom did not preside over the order of the universe. No doubt this proof,

like the preceding one, is open to objections, and what is worse, to unanswerable objections. But Rousseau was not afraid of these, and had something better than arguments to oppose against them. What is the use of silencing me, he said to his adversaries, if you cannot persuade me; and how can you take from me the involuntary feeling which contradicts you in spite of myself? Cold reasoning cannot prevail against my ardent conviction. Thus, I believe that the world is presided over by a wise and powerful Will; I see this, or rather, I feel it, and it is the only important thing for me to know. Do not ask me whether the world is eternal or was created, or what are the metaphysical attributes of God. It is sufficient for me to have an unshaken conviction that He exists, that He moves the universe, that He ordains all things, and that He is therefore intelligent, powerful and good. Let philosophers search further; my heart and reason are contented with this.

Therefore the problem of evil, which Voltaire thinks so formidable, causes Rousseau but little anxiety. In a long letter, addressed to none other than Voltaire, on the occasion of his *Poem on the Earthquake at Lisbon*, Rousseau resolutely defends optimism. If we admit that there is a powerful, wise and good God, and that the world is His work, how can we, without contradicting ourselves, say that this work is bad? God's designs may be inscrutable, but they must needs be perfect like Himself. Then, if we examine the different kinds

of evils from which we suffer, moral evil is unquestionably our own work, and physical evil would be nothing but for our vices, which have given it its poignancy for us. "O man!" exclaims Rousseau, "seek no more the author of evil; it is thyself." Nature had not raised in Lisbon four-storied houses to crush their inmates in their fall when the earth quakes. Nature intended man to live in the open air; man has built cities—abysses which engulf mankind. Moreover, here again the arguments of philosophers are powerless against the strength of inward feeling, which bears as strong a testimony to God's goodness as to His existence. In matters so far above the reach of human understanding, shall an objection which I cannot refute, vanquish at one blow a body of doctrines so compact, so closely linked together, formed after such careful meditation, so well suited to my reason, my heart and my whole being, and strengthened by the inward assent which I feel is withheld from all others?

The same inward assent makes us sure that we are free; no other demonstration is needed. Indeed liberty is the most essential characteristic of mankind. It is not so much man's understanding that specifically distinguishes him from other animals as his being a free agent. But from his freedom it follows that the soul must be immortal; for if we are free, the soul must be immaterial and essentially independent of the necessary laws which rule over matter. "It is especially in the consciousness of liberty that the spirituality of the soul is shown;

for physics offers a kind of explanation of the mechanism of the senses and the formation of ideas; but in the power to will, or rather to choose, and in the consciousness of this power, we find only purely spiritual activities, and nothing therein can be explained by the laws of mechanics." Moreover, belief in another life is inseparable from belief in a good and just God. Should I have no other proof of the immateriality of the soul than the triumph of the wicked and the oppression of the just, this alone would prevent my doubting it. The physical world offers to my contemplation an admirable order, which persuades me of the wisdom of its author; can I believe that the moral order, whose author is the same, is less perfect, or that it does not even exist? Now this order requires everyone to be treated according to his deserts. Therefore we shall live after death. The union of the soul and the body is a forced condition; when they cease to be united they both resume their natural state.

From metaphysics to religion the transition is imperceptible. In fact, they coincide, and the "Vicaire Savoyard" does not separate the one from the other. Rousseau's religion is based on a double natural revelation. God has manifested Himself to men both in the universe, by His works, and within themselves, in their hearts. Christians ostensibly mistake this natural religion for atheism or irreligion, exactly the opposite doctrine. They are unjust, for natural revelation is enough to make

us religious. Nothing warns me that any other is necessary. How can I be guilty if I serve God according to the lights He puts into my mind and the feelings with which He inspires my heart? It is not on a few stray leaves that we must seek God's law, but within the heart of man, where His hand deigned to write it.

If, therefore, Rousseau calls himself a sincere Christian, it is on the express condition that he shall be allowed to frame his own creed. He is a Christian, not as a disciple of priests, but as a disciple of Jesus Christ. The majesty of the Scriptures astounds him, the holiness of the Gospel speaks to his heart. But this same Gospel is full of incredible things, offensive to reason, and both inconceivable and inadmissible to every sensible man; Rousseau therefore will not believe them. Vainly are we urged to "keep our reason under." One who deceives us might say the same. We must have reasons wherewith to keep our reason under. Moreover, the Gospel is the most sublime of all books, but still it is a book, a book unknown to more than three-quarters of the world; can I believe that a Scythian or an African is less dear to our common Father than you or I? The only indisputable revelation is the one that is given universally to all men. And when Rousseau added that all religions are good, so long as God is fitly served, and worship is essentially from the heart, he could not but expect both Catholic bishops and Protestant clergymen to excommunicate him.

Rousseau's natural religion, however, stands distinctly apart from that of Voltaire and his friends. Though it diverges from historical religions, it is conscious of its close affinity with them, nor does Rousseau fail to appreciate the part they have played in the life of mankind. He will not denounce as impostors the founders of religion who say they are sent by God. He never inveighs against the craftiness and hypocrisy of priests. He does not cast ridicule upon Christian dogma, or scoff and jeer at the Bible. He simply says that supernatural revelation seems to him unnecessary, and that as he sees objections to it, he remains in "respectful doubt."

But above all—and this is the essential difference—Voltaire's natural religion remained a purely philosophical belief. Voltaire acknowledged the existence of God because it was still more difficult to deny than to assert it, and especially because a retributive and avenging God is necessary. Rousseau agrees to this; but to him religion is also something quite different; it is a living element of his consciousness, the very foundation of it. "Without faith, no real virtue can exist." This is a phrase which none of the Encyclopædists would have written, or perhaps understood. The cold natural religion of the "philosophers," a religion without faith, could not but seem vain and blasphemous to all believing souls; the natural religion of Rousseau, though no more orthodox than that of Voltaire, had the power to move many pious

souls even to enthusiasm. The philosophers speak of religion with indifference, if not with hatred and scorn, as men who do without it and at most desire it only for others. Rousseau speaks of it impressively, as a man who practices it, loves it and could not live without it.

As Rousseau's religion is inseparable from his metaphysics, his ethics also is closely linked to his religion. It is wholly based on the "inward revelation" which is called conscience, and which dictates to us what we ought to do. If a conflict arises between it and our reason, conscience is what we must unhesitatingly follow. Far from believing that whoever judges according to its light is apt to err, I believe that it never leads us astray, and that it is the light which guides our feeble understanding when we try to go beyond what we can conceive. Reason too often deceives us, and we have only too good a right to impeach its authority. But conscience never deceives us; it is man's true guide; it is to the soul what instinct is to the body. It would be sufficient to guide our steps in innocence were we always willing to listen to it.

This is the light that "lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Cast your eyes upon every nation, search every history: among so many strange and inhuman forms of worship and such prodigious variety of manners and characters, you will find everywhere the same ideas of justice and probity, everywhere the same moral principles, the

same notions concerning good and evil. There must therefore be in the innermost depths of the soul an innate principle of justice and virtue, according to which, in spite of our own maxims, we judge our own and others' actions to be good or bad.

Accordingly all the morality of our actions lies in our own judgment of them. While, according to the philosophers, the social utility of our actions is the measure of their morality, and according to Voltaire social virtues are the only ones there are, Rousseau conceives morality to be entirely inward and essentially independent of the material content of our actions. It was in this way that he was enabled, without any hypocrisy, to make a distinction between his actions, some of which he himself judges to be culpable and base, and his heart, which never had any wrong intentions. He makes an effort to assign to morality within the conscience a sphere of superior dignity where nothing else in the universe could rival it. One of the most serious errors of modern civilization, and perhaps the most serious of all, consists precisely in having misapprehended the pre-eminence of morality and having made it subordinate to knowledge. "One may observe," he says, "in the arguments of my adversaries such marked enthusiasm for the wonders of the understanding, that this other faculty (conscience), though infinitely more sublime and more capable of exalting and ennobling the soul, never counts for anything." Kant, in a well-known passage, relates that it was Rousseau's protest that

opened his eyes. He had thought until then, as did all men of his time, that the differences between men were chiefly due to their degree of intellectual culture. Rousseau taught him a better opinion. Any man whose conscience speaks within him is worth as much as any other, and the best man—that is, the one who is most worthy of admiration and respect—is the one who best knows how to obey this inner voice.

But Kant recognizes in man a natural principle of wickedness, which he calls *radical evil*, and which is very much like original sin; whereas Rousseau, on the contrary, takes it for granted that man is naturally good. According to him this is an indisputable maxim, and the fundamental principle of all morals. But we must understand just what it means. Rousseau does not mean to say that man is born with a natural tendency to merciful, generous and charitable deeds, and an instinctive dislike of all the opposite ones. Nothing could be more contrary to the general principles of his philosophy; for the moral teaching founded on innate benevolence and sympathy, then widely current in England, supposes man to be a naturally sociable being, whereas Rousseau thinks man intended by nature to live alone; it measures the moral worth of actions by their social value, whereas Rousseau places it entirely in the intention.

When, therefore, Rousseau says that man is naturally good, this formula has two distinct meanings according as we consider man in a state of

nature or man in a state of society. In the state of nature man's only passion is the love of his own person; it is useful for the preservation of the individual, but is itself indifferent both to good and to evil. Suppose—and the supposition is by no means absurd — suppose that man had never emerged from this condition; he would never have had any other relation with his fellow creatures than those that are needful for the preservation of the species; he would have lived a solitary life, being all in all to himself; he would have been guiltless. Therefore there is no original perversity in the human heart; nor does it now contain a single vice for whose presence there we cannot account. It is therefore true that man in a state of nature is not wicked.

But in a state of society reason and language are developed, and men become virtuous and vicious. How is moral conscience, this infallible inward guide, to emerge from the state of *non-wickedness* which is characteristic of the original man? Rousseau's solution of this difficulty is as follows: The love of his own person (the only passion of man in a state of nature) is not a simple passion. It is twofold, like man himself, who is composed of a soul and a body. Tending to the welfare of the body, it is the love of his own person, the appetite of the senses; tending to the welfare of the soul, it is the love of order. The latter, developed and made active, bears the name of conscience. In man in a state of nature—that is to say, solitary—this love of order, still aimless, is not more visible

than is the stem of the future plant in the seed. Conscience is developed and becomes active only as man attains knowledge. It is non-existent in a man who has never compared objects nor become aware of his relations. But when men begin to look upon their fellows, they begin to conceive ideas of order, fitness and justice; then conscience acts. So long as there is less opposition of interests than mutuality of help, men are essentially good. This is why Rousseau has so much regard for savages. The moral consciousness, still dormant in man in the state of nature, is awake in them, and they are not yet corrupted as civilized man is. But society, as it develops, multiplies the causes of conflict between contrary interests, and natural goodness—i. e., love of order—is thrust aside by the perverse suggestions of egotism.

Thus, according to Rousseau, man's original goodness is identified with the rational revelation of order and justice. It is therefore closely allied to the revelation of God, since God is the very principle of order. Man is capable of morality in the same manner as he is capable of religion. Society and intercourse between men bring the moral conscience to light, but do not produce it. Ideas of order and justice are therefore so far from arising out of the development of social life that society itself cannot be right and respectable unless ideas of order and justice preside over its organization. Political principles will follow naturally from moral principles.

In a state of nature each individual is in himself a perfect and solitary whole. The social state makes him part of a larger whole, from which he will, as it were, receive life and being. Man becomes a "fractionary unit," whose value resides in its relation to the whole, which is the social body. A "partial and moral" existence succeeds the "physical and independent" existence that we receive from nature. Thus good social institutions are those which are best able to change the nature of man—that is, to make the community his only real self, so that each individual no longer believes himself to be a unit, but a part of the single whole.

Our modern societies are very remote from such an ideal. Each man there pursues his own private interest at the expense of the interests of others, and zeal for the public good is assumed merely in order to make sure of personal advantages. There is no more patriotism, there are no more citizens. But things have not always been thus. When we read ancient history, we seem to be carried away into another universe and among other beings. The strong souls of the Romans and Greeks seem to be historical exaggerations. Yet they really existed, and they were men like ourselves. What, then, prevents us from being like them? Our prejudices, our base philosophy, our selfish passions. And above all, modern societies have had no "legislators." Tradition takes the place of reason, and acquired rights that of justice.

Let us leave history out of consideration, and consider society in its essence. It is based on an initial pact, agreed to by all, the sole aim of which is to make lawful, by means of organization, the relations between men; not in order to destroy natural equality, but on the contrary to substitute moral and lawful equality for whatever physical inequality nature may have put between them; so that, although they may be unequal in strength or genius, they all become equal by agreement and in point of rights. To carry out this compact a form of association must be found that will defend and protect, with the united strength of all, the person and possessions of each associate, and in which every man, uniting with the others, yet obeys no one but himself and remains as free as he was before. The clauses of this compact may be reduced to one: the total surrender of each associate, together with all his rights, to the whole commonwealth. Surrender here does not mean subjection. On the contrary, this contract is a safeguard for the individual. It is "an advantageous exchange of natural independence for liberty."

Thus society is constituted by an act of free will; by such an act is it also maintained. Constraint here is legitimate only because it is consented to even by him who endures it. All men are free, all men are equal, in the sense of having an equal share in the fundamental contract. And if from society we pass on to the state, it follows from the

principles laid down that the sovereign is the people considered as a whole; for the source of political power can evidently be found only in the same general and free will which is the foundation of civil society.

Two contrary tendencies here act upon Rousseau's thought. One, inspired by the ancients, makes the citizen subordinate to the city, the welfare of which is the supreme aim; it finds expression in Rousseau's enthusiastic admiration for the heroes of Plutarch and for the laws of Lacedæmon. The other, of Christian origin, recognizes in the human person an absolute value, and, to use Kant's expression, will have man considered always as an end and never as a means. To reconcile these two tendencies is what Rousseau seeks in his idea of law. Law is the most sublime of all human institutions. It is a means of binding men down in order to make them free; it re-establishes on a foundation of right the natural equality of men. It is the expression of the will of the sovereign—that is, of the people, when this will is universal both in its source and in its object. If, in fact, only a part of the people made the law, the other part, being compelled to obey it, would not be free and the social compact would be violated. If the sovereign gives orders in view of an individual end, this is no longer a law but a decree; it is not an act of sovereignty but of magistracy. Only when the matter decided upon is general, like the will that decides upon it, is the act a law. The people which makes

it so exercises its sovereignty, which is absolute, unalienable, sacred and always rightful; for the general will is the expression of the social compact itself, which bases all civil intercourse between men upon justice.

Perfection in a state would therefore consist in finding a form of government that would place law above men. This was what the ancient legislators sought. If a people merely promises to obey a family or a prince, it is dissolved by this very act and ceases to be a people. From that moment there is a master; there is no longer a legitimate sovereign. On the other hand, a people is free whatever its form of government, so long as the governing man is looked upon not as a man but as the instrument of the law. In one word, there is no liberty without law, or where there is any one who is above the laws.

We cannot here enter into the details of Rousseau's political views or try to discover how far he may have been influenced by reminiscences of the constitution of Geneva. It is sufficient to observe that the method followed in his politics is the same that he used throughout his philosophy. He purposely eliminates all that is acquired, in order to determine what comes "from nature." He therefore puts aside whatever institutions and constitutions the course of historical events may have brought. He supposes man just emerging from the "state of nature" to live with his fellow-creatures, and he asks himself of what sort the conventions

agreed upon between them will have to be in order to be acceptable and right. He shows that these conventions are reducible to a social compact, based upon the "general will," and having as its expression the law. Subject to the law and to that alone, men will enjoy all the advantages of the social state without losing thereby either equality or liberty; justice then would be respected. In a state where all men should respect the law, the expression of their own will, and have nothing to apprehend but from it, there would be neither masters nor slaves, neither weak nor powerful; there would be only citizens, equal before the law, equal in fact, vying with one another in virtue and all devoted to the public interest.

If we are far from this ideal the fault lies with our customs, institutions, prejudices, and particularly with the inequality of fortunes. The rich derive infinitely more advantage from the social organization than the poor and misuse it in many ways. Their vices are the punishment for their injustice and for the abject state in which they keep those who have nothing. Thus does the social order become more and more corrupt, and man, the sport of his passions, spoiled by luxury or degraded by penury, is as different from what he would be in a properly-organized society as from the inoffensive being he would be by nature.

We are thus brought back, after a long but inevitable circuit, to the question proposed in the

beginning. Knowing what was the state of nature which man has left for ever, knowing what his present social state is and what it ought to be, what education ought man to receive? What is he to be taught, and how?

As a principle, education should be national and public. There lies the essential cause of the "superhuman grandeur" of Sparta. There are opened the ways unknown to the moderns, by which the ancients brought men to such fortitude and patriotic zeal as are unexampled among ourselves, but the germs of which are in the hearts of all men. To train citizens is not the work of a day, and in order to have men good citizens they must be taught when children and accustomed from their earliest years to regard themselves only as members of the state and to consider their own existence, so to speak, as part of that of the state. Evidently this can be obtained only by public education entirely directed to this object. Public education is, therefore, one of the fundamental maxims of popular and right government.

But as nothing is more unlike Sparta than the states of the eighteenth century, our ambition shall not be to train citizens, and we shall turn from the question of public control. We must limit our task, which even then will be difficult enough, to preventing the social man from being entirely artificial. "Conformity with nature" is the motto of Rousseau's pedagogy. In accordance with this principle, he advises mothers to suckle their children

themselves; in devotion to the same principle he waits before speaking of religion to his pupil till the latter is able to understand the twofold revelation of conscience and of the universe. The good teacher is he who assumes no other function than to present matters in such a way that the lessons of experience may be clear, striking and calculated to produce a durable impression upon the child's mind. He leaves it to nature to educate by degrees the child's senses, understanding, and conscience; he sometimes encourages nature, but never forestalls her. Thus the child escapes the many prejudices insidiously instilled into his mind by the customary methods of education, which are afterwards so difficult to eradicate.

Thus, Émile shall not be a man made by man; he shall be one made by Nature. This does not involve making him a savage, nor confining him in the depths of the forests; but though absorbed in the vortex of society, we ask only that he be not led away by man's passions or opinions, that he see with his own eyes, feel with his own heart, be governed by no authority save his own reason. *To be one's self:* nothing is more rare, difficult and even impossible, unless one has been prepared for it from childhood. As soon as he is born, man is wrapped in swaddling clothes; when dead, he is sewed up in a shroud; all his life long he is pinioned by laws, manners, and customs, decorum and professional obligations. Nobody ever suffered more than did Rousseau from social tyranny and hypocrisy; nor

did any cry of revolt ever echo so far and so long as the cry he uttered against them.

Does this mean that he dreams of bringing man back to his primitive state? Certainly not, for there is a wide difference "between the natural man living in a state of nature, and the natural man living in a state of society." The latter must adapt himself to his situation. He is a "savage destined for life in towns." He must therefore receive a systematic education and be instructed in all accomplishments. Mingling with other men, he must learn to live not like them but with them. Our race does not like to be half finished. In the present state of things, a man left to himself among other men would be the most distorted of all. Whence it follows that in a well-regulated republic the state owes to every man not only the possibility of living by his own work, but also such education as will make of him a free man and a good citizen.

No philosopher, and more broadly speaking, no writer for a century past has had an influence comparable to that of Rousseau. But the very strength and durability of this influence, which is still deeply felt in our times, has often prevented him from being studied and judged with impartiality. He has enthusiastic admirers and intense opponents, and both sides have maintained legends often very far from true. Thus many people still believe that to Rousseau must in an especial manner be ascribed the responsibility for the excesses committed

during the Revolution, and that the worst terrorists were inspired chiefly by his doctrines. But the responsibility of Rousseau in this connection is neither greater nor less than that of other philosophers of the eighteenth century, and he even contributed, as Auguste Comte clearly perceived, to bring on the religious reaction which combated these very philosophers. The error may have arisen from the fact that other French philosophers from motives of policy met the temporal power with deference and with flattery, whereas Rousseau, being a Genevese citizen, boasted of his republican feelings. But for all that he is not a revolutionary spirit. On the contrary, he counseled political moderation and prudence. Even the unhappy Poles, who were on the point of perishing, he exhorted not to lay their hands rashly upon their national constitution, and he predicts most profound misfortunes for the French if they try to change the institutions under which they have lived for so many centuries. Though the inequalities of fortune are monstrous, though "the demon of property pollutes whatever it touches," yet Rousseau does not mean to lay hands on vested rights, and it is in the future only that he perceives means of opposing the ever-increasing social inequality.

But having said this much, we must acknowledge that Rousseau's philosophy was big with consequences. The opposition between what is natural and what is artificial, which is its leading idea, was apt to lead minds in love with logic and justice a

very great way, if applied to every aspect of human life. This opposition was, of course, not discovered by Rousseau. It had been known ever since there had been moralists; and especially since the beginning of the eighteenth century the "good savage" and "nature" had been quite in fashion. Rousseau's achievement lies in making of this opposition the principle of a whole moral and social doctrine, and of finding therein a means of distinguishing between what is and what ought to be, by declaring nature to be good, and evil to have sprung from human conventions. Therefore, if the evils under which we labor are of social origin, the finding of remedies depends upon us. For this it is sufficient to "see with our eyes, to feel with our hearts, and to judge with our reason;" to free ourselves from traditional preconceptions and prejudices. We shall then plan for man, not a chimerical return to an impracticable state of nature, but a social organization more in conformity with order and justice.

The very foundation principles of the present state of society are thus called into question. The lawfulness of individual property, the excessive inequality of fortunes, the sovereignty of the people, the reciprocal rights and duties of the individual and the state, the relation between the church and political powers, are so many problems proposed by Rousseau in such a way that it became thenceforth impossible not to take an interest in them. He thought the solutions more simple and

easy than they really are: witness the "civil religion" he wished to establish in the name of the state, which was often so entirely misunderstood. But the thought that led him to ask these questions was after all just, and many of his ideas were original and suggestive. In spite of his connection with the "philosophers," he really follows none of them. How many others, friends and adversaries, have followed him!

CHAPTER IX.

CONDILLAC.

In order to characterise Voltaire, Rousseau, and the Encyclopædists from the point of view of philosophy, the Germans often use a rather significant phrase. They call them philosophers *für die Welt*, popularisers. They consider them quite as desirous of spreading their doctrines among the public as of testing them thoroughly. But was there not one among them, or very near them, with whom the speculative interest stood foremost, a philosopher without any qualification and in the strictest sense of the word, a thinker, in fact, who joined together into a system the body of the philosophical ideas which prevailed in the latter half of the eighteenth century?

This demand was met by Abbé de Condillac. He was, as he has been called, the "philosophers' philosopher." Being loved and admired by most of them, he was for some time a contributor to the *Encyclopædia*. He made a long stay in Italy, as tutor to the son of the Duke of Parma, and then returned to France and lived peacefully in the country, apart from literary and philosophical quarrels. He never appeared in the French Academy except on the day when he made his inaugural

address. Yet he was personally acquainted with nearly all the distinguished men of the time, and the continual succession of his published works did not permit the public to forget him. These works were numerous and bulky, from the *Essai sur l'Origine des Connaissances Humaines* (1746), in which many of the ideas which he was to develop later on were already sketched, down to the *Langue des Calculs*, which did not appear until after his death. He touched not only upon every phase of philosophy proper, but also upon pedagogy, grammar, history, political economy, and social science, the most original portion of all this considerable body of work being that on the theory of knowledge..

Condillac proposed studying the human mind, not as a metaphysician, but as a psychologist and a logician; not in order to discover the nature of it, but to understand its operations. He wished to observe the art with which they are combined, and how we are to manage them in order to acquire as much intelligence as we are capable of receiving; and, therefore, he wished to trace back the origin of our ideas, to discover their birth, to follow them as far as the limits set them by nature, and in this way to "determine the extent and boundaries of our knowledge and to renovate the human understanding altogether."

Condillac's leading idea therefore is derived from Locke, but not from Locke only. Hostile as he was to innate ideas and Cartesian metaphysics,

there is in him clearly something of the Cartesian spirit. Locke had inquired chiefly into the contents of the human mind; Condillac endeavored to construct a system. He sought an "unassailable first principle, sufficient to explain all the rest." He sought it, it is true, in the primitive data of the senses, whereas Descartes had found it in the intuition of thought; but the opposition between their doctrines does not exclude a certain analogy in their conceptions of the proper method.

Condillac never concealed his indebtedness to Locke, but his estimate of the philosophy of his predecessor varied. In his first work he seems to follow him faithfully and to recognise, as Locke did, two sources to our ideas: sensation and reflexion. Later on, when more thoroughly master of his own thought, he asserted sensation to be the only source of our ideas. He considers Locke to have erred in not carrying the analysis far enough. Locke did not realise how indispensable it is that we should learn how to feel, see, hear, etc. All the faculties of the soul he thought to be innate qualities, and he did not suspect that they might possibly originate in sensation itself. He thought that we naturally make use of our senses by a sort of instinct. Most of the judgments which are mingled with our sensations escaped him. In one word, it was in the very name of empiricism that Condillac criticised Locke's empiricism. It is not sufficient to reduce the whole of our knowledge to sentient knowledge. We must find out how this

sentient knowledge is produced, resolve it into its elements, and show how these elements can account for every form of activity in the human soul.

Let then our starting point be sensation, isolated by analysis and separated—or at least Condillac thought it so—from all judgments mingled with it. This sensation does not bring us out of ourselves. It merely consists in a modification of consciousness which may be keen or weak, pleasurable or painful; but it teaches us nothing of what is outside ourselves, or even whether anything exists outside ourselves. This would be true as regards all our sensations, if we had not touch. The sensations of touch have the singular property of suggesting to us the idea of objects distinct from ourselves. They are at the same time feelings and ideas: feelings in their relation to the soul which they modify, ideas in their connexion with some outward thing. Being accustomed to ascribe all the sensations of the sense of touch to external objects, we fall into like habits with our other senses. Thus our sensations become objective; they appear to us no longer as modifications of the state of the ego, but as qualities of bodies around us. They have become ideas.

Let us now suppose a sensation more vivid than others to force itself upon our consciousness so powerfully as to throw all others, at least temporarily, into the shade: this exclusive sensation will be what we call attention. But attention may just as well be directed to a past sensation, which recurs

again to the mind, as to a present sensation. Memory is therefore nothing but a transformed sensation. We are thus capable of a twofold kind of attention, exercised on the one hand by memory, on the other by the present sensation. Once given a twofold kind of attention, and there results comparison; for, attending to two ideas and comparing them are one and the same thing. Now, we cannot compare them without perceiving some difference or resemblance between them. To perceive such relations is to perform an act of judgment. Thus does sensation, as it undergoes transformations, become successively attention, memory, comparison, and judgment. Having reached this point we have explained the whole human understanding, which is, in fact, nothing but a collection or combination of the operations of the soul.

By looking upon sensations as representative we have observed that all our ideas and the faculties of our understanding issue from them. Now if we consider them with regard to their pleasurable or painful character, we shall behold the birth of all the operations usually ascribed to the will. Condillac lays it down as a principle that there are no neutral sensations, but that each of them gives us either pleasure or pain, and makes us inclined to continue it or to escape it. Were it not for this property of our sensations, intellectual activity would not be aroused,—attention and memory, and therefore understanding, would be left undeveloped. But nature has made us very sensible of the rela-

tive character of the sensations that affect us. We cannot be uncomfortable, or less comfortable than we have been before, without comparing our present state with the states we have formerly been in; and this comparison makes us feel some uneasiness, or disquiet, and as soon as there is added to this the idea of the object we think likely to contribute to our happiness, the action of our faculties is determined in the direction of this object. This is what we call desire. But from desire spring passions: love, hatred, hope, fear, volition. Again, all these are but transformed sensations.

In order to illustrate his theory, Condillac, in his *Traité des Sensations*, had recourse to the celebrated fiction of an animated statue, shaped internally like ourselves, in which he awakens the senses in succession, beginning with smell and ending with touch. Next we see the faculties of the soul springing one after another from the progressive transformations of sensation. Similar fictions are to be found in Diderot and Buffon, which is sufficient to prove that they suited the taste of their contemporaries and answered their idea of the development of the mind. To-day, on the contrary, we are chiefly struck by the artificial and arbitrary character of such a supposition. We see in it an involuntary confession of the fact that this theory of knowledge proceeds in a purely abstract way.

Yet it would be unfair to condemn their doctrine summarily on that account. It is with Condillac,

as with many other French philosophers of his time, between whose minds and his there was evident affinity. The solutions he unhesitatingly proposes are hasty and often rash; the problems he sets and the general method he indicates for their solution are highly interesting. In his theory of transformed sensation, Condillac seeks to account for the evolution of the human mind by starting from an irreducible "first fact." As Buffon tried to explain the genesis of our solar system, as Rousseau sought afterwards to explain the genesis of society, Condillac endeavors to trace back the genesis of the faculties of the human mind. On the way he notices many interesting psychological facts. He shows the part played by the association of ideas, which causes us to look upon notions that are really acquired and complex as being natural and simple; he sees that the association of ideas is a particular case of habit. And thus the task of the philosopher, according to Condillac, consists chiefly in dissociating, by means of analysis, the elements which habit has joined together so closely that we can no longer see where they are welded.

Analysis, therefore, does not stop where reflexion and memory can separate or resolve no further. It is true we have a tendency to believe that part of our knowledge is born with us. But this is because we can remember a time when we did not know a given thing only in case we can remember having learned it; and in order to be conscious of learning we must know something already. How

then could we remember having learned to see, hear, or touch? And yet it is certain that we have learned these things. Consequently, we are driven to suppose only that to be innate the acquisition of which we cannot otherwise account for. All the rest is the product of experience. For instance, if some faculty happens to be perfected (as the judgment of distance by sight), it is therefore acquired; it was in its beginning, at a time beyond the reach of our memory, a first improvement upon some earlier state. Thus Condillac applied to psychology Pascal's well-known saying: "Nature itself is only a first habit, as habit is a second nature."

From these principles naturally follows the theory of instinct. We can distinguish two "selves" in every man: the self of habit and the self of reflexion. "The self of reflexion is its own master, and is conscious of its own operations while performing them. It endeavors to know or reach the objects which it has in view, and which it may give up for other objects when it pleases. The "self of habit" acts in a reflex way, so to speak, without the intervention of consciousness being needed. It touches, it sees, and it directs the animal faculties; it guides and preserves the body. If we suppress in a grown-up man the "self of reflexion," the "self of habit" which remains suffices for such needs as are absolutely necessary for the preservation of the animal. Instinct is nothing but habit *minus* reflexion. But, Condillac adds immediately after, it is by reflecting that beasts acquire it. As they have

but few wants, a time soon comes when they have done all that reflexion can teach them. They daily repeat the same actions, and their habits become automatic.

Yet does not instinct often appear to be innate and hereditary?—It does, says Condillac, but it is not so; for we find it subject to improvement; now, whatever is subject to improvement is acquired. All these consequences are most logically inferred from Condillac's own principles. Therefore he had a right to answer those who reproached him with having drawn his inspiration from the celebrated passage in which Buffon represents man awakening to life and admiring nature around him: "Monsieur de Buffon supposes his imaginary man to possess in the beginning habits which he ought to have had him acquire." To treat as acquired habits faculties which appear to be most inherent in our nature, is Condillac's favorite maxim. We all know how it prospered in the present century. It was one of the ruling principles of psychology, as long as the philosophy of association was in favor, in England as well as in France.

The sum of our reflexions over and above our habits constitutes our reason. But language is necessary for the development of reason. Were our thought limited to the representation of individual and concrete objects and unable to form abstract and general ideas, it would remain forever in a rudimentary state. Now such ideas are simply denominations and designations of classes. For

instance, the idea of "animal" connotes characteristics common to man, the lion, the horse, and the totality of animals, and these characteristics only. This idea I can fix only with the help of the word which expresses it. We see therefore how indispensable words are to us. But for them, there would be no abstract ideas. Had we no abstract ideas, we should have neither genera nor species, and had we neither genera nor species, we could not reason upon anything. To speak, to reason, to form general or abstract ideas, are at bottom one and the same thing.

Therefore, to communicate thought is not the only function of language. Whenever man thinks, even though he should not express his thought outwardly, he speaks. This has been called "inward language." The "first advantage" of language, according to Condillac, is to separate thought into its elements by means of a series of signs which successively represent the same. Whenever I reason, all the ideas which constitute this reasoning are present in my mind at once. I should not be able either to enter upon the reasoning or to bring it to a close if the series of judgments of which it is composed were not grasped all together by my mind. It is not, therefore, by speaking that I judge and reason, and these operations of the mind necessarily precede discourse. But discourse is a real analysis which resolves these complex operations and separates their successive stages. It leads the mind from one thought to another, and from

one discovery to another. The more limited the faculty of thinking is in one who does not analyse his own thoughts, and who, in consequence, does not observe all that he does while thinking, the further this faculty must reach in one who does analyse his thoughts and observes even their minutest details.

Consequently, "the art of reasoning is equivalent to the art of speaking." In this sense well-constructed language is akin to well-constructed science. Nearly all our errors originate in defects or misuse of our language. If we treat abstractions as realities, that is, if we mistake for a thing actually existing what is merely the designation of an assemblage of qualities, is not that a misuse of language? How often do we make use of words before we have determined their meaning, and even without having felt the need of determining it! Such confusion in language necessarily implies confusion in thought. Error thus begets error, and language lends itself no less easily to false systems than to true analysis.

There is then but one way of restoring order to the faculty of thinking, and that is to forget all that we have learned, to return to the origin of our ideas, to follow them as they develop, and, as Bacon says, to make over the human understanding. "Go back to nature," is Condillac's motto, as it was also to be that of Rousseau. Error is our own doing. We think and speak erroneously, and therefore we blunder; but we have only ourselves

to blame. The spirit of the rising generation is modelled after that of the preceding one, and erroneous systems are handed down together with the languages which are their vehicles. Such are the effects of bad education, and education is bad only inasmuch as it is contrary to nature. "Nature has begun all things, and always aright: this truth cannot be repeated too often."

We imagine that languages would be more perfect if they were the work of philosophers, which is a serious mistake. The languages of the sciences (algebra excepted) have no advantage over other languages. According to Condillac, the earliest vulgar languages must have been the best fitted for reasoning. The development of the ideas and faculties of the soul must have been perceptible in these languages, in which the first acceptation of each word was still known, and in which analogy supplied all the others. They were transparent things, so to speak, through which one could watch the progress of the composition of thought. Their syntax was crystallised logic, and the science of the mind thus spontaneously revealed itself in the structure of language. "Sound metaphysics began before languages, and they owe to it their best qualities. But this metaphysics was then not so much a science as an instinct. It was nature guiding men without their knowing it, and metaphysics became a science only after it had ceased to be sound."

There is therefore, according to Condillac, a natural method which is the soul of language and science. If we followed it properly, it would lead us infallibly to truth. This method he calls "analysis." In his first work, he contented himself with saying that analysis consists merely in combining and separating our ideas in order to make different comparisons, and thus to discover their mutual relation and the new ideas to which they may give rise. This analysis is "the secret of discoveries," because it always takes us back to the origin of things. "It consists," he says again, "in tracing our ideas back to their origin, and in studying their development."

We see even by these definitions that in Condillac's thought analysis is not opposed to synthesis as decomposition is to composition. It comprehends both processes; there is no reasoning which is not a succession of compositions and decompositions, and the two operations are inseparable. Yet the distinction between analysis and synthesis subsists in Condillac, but in a special sense. To proceed analytically, in his view, is to start from the simple, the primitive, and the particular, proceeding with the help of observation and experience, and reproducing the "development" of things. To proceed synthetically is to start from general and abstract principles, aiming thence to deduce the particular and the concrete—an ambitious and faulty method which has too often led metaphysicians astray.

If our minds were powerful enough to perceive distinctly, at one glance, a collection of objects or all the qualities of an object and the connexions between these, we should have no need of analysis. Our knowledge would be intuitive and perfect from the first. But it is not so; we first have collective impressions, and in order to transform these into knowledge we must decompose them. We therefore consider one after another the objects which form part of a whole, and compare them in order to judge of their mutual connexion. When we have thus become acquainted with their respective positions, we observe in succession all those that fill the intervals; we compare each of them with the nearest principal object, and thus we determine its position. In this way we make out all the objects, the form and situation of which we have discovered, and take them all in at one glance. The order assigned to them in our mind is no longer successive, it has become simultaneous. It is the order in which the objects really are situated, and we perceive them all at once distinctly; whence this specific definition of analysis: "To analyse is simply to observe in *successive order* the qualities of an object, in order to assign to them in the mind *the simultaneous order* in which they exist."

But there are many ways of conceiving this successive order that leads to a view, both simultaneous and distinct, of the relations between objects; can it be said that any one of these many is the pre-eminently analytical order? "The whole diffi-

culty," says Condillac, "consists in finding how to begin in order to apprehend ideas in their most essential connexion with one another. I assert that the only combination by which this is to be found is the one which is in accordance with the very genesis of things. We must start from the first idea which must have produced all others." The analytical order is the genetic order. If we knew a sufficient number of facts, and had studied them closely enough, systems would in some sort be self-made, as facts would group themselves of their own accord in such an order as to explain one another in succession. We should then find that in every system there is a first fact, which is the beginning of it, and which for this reason might be called the principle, for principle and beginning are two words which have originally the same meaning. Any system which does not thus exactly reproduce the order of the evolution and composition of facts, any system resting on general and abstract principles is arbitrary, and consequently false. The logical order of science coincides with the order in which phenomena are produced in the course of time. In one word, in this empirical conception of analysis the mind is methodically made subordinate to things. It is in things that order is inherent, and the function of the mind consists in reflecting back this order as faithfully as possible, and in being, to use Bacon's expression, a perfect mirror.

The stumbling-block to empiricism of this kind

is generally to be found in mathematics and metaphysics. As regards mathematics, Condillac got out of the difficulty by reducing every demonstration to a succession of equivalent propositions "the identity of which is obvious," and is more easily perceived when we use algebraical signs. Nor was metaphysics embarrassing to Condillac, no doubt because he took but little care to make it fit in with the rest of his system. He proves dogmatically the existence of God from the necessity of a first cause and from the existence of final causes. We again meet in him the argument of the watch and the watchmaker, which Voltaire thought decisive. Without knowing the essence of the soul and of the body, Condillac knows that they are two distinct substances. "The body may be defined as an extended substance, and the soul as a sentient substance. It is sufficient to consider extension and sensation as two incompatible properties, to be convinced that the substance of the soul and that of the body are two widely different substances. Locke was wrong in declaring that it will perhaps be forever impossible for us to know whether God has not endowed some heap of matter shaped in a certain way with the faculty of thinking. For the subject that thinks must be one. Now a heap of matter is not one; it is a multitude. The soul thus being a different substance from the body, we cannot understand how the latter would act upon it. The body can be only an occasional cause. We must therefore acknowledge that the senses are but

the occasional source of our knowledge. Free access is thus left for idealism.

There is no reason why we should question Condillac's sincerity as regards his spiritualistic metaphysics; but the very fact of its occupying so small a place in his system, and being so loosely connected with it, is characteristic. It means that psychology was beginning to live an independent life and trying to rely solely on observation and experience. Locke had shown the way; Condillac advanced farther. True, his solutions are still far from perfect. He gives bad definitions of the terms he uses, and commentators in our days are not of one mind as to what he understands by "sensation," "perception," and "nature." No doubt, when he tries to analyse facts, to discover their origin, and to trace back their genesis, he most often construes them with the aid of factors in themselves very complex. Nevertheless he has a precise conception of empirical psychology, and attempts to study the especial share of each of the senses in our knowledge, to analyse habit and instinct, to define the function of the association of ideas, and, in short, to discover the genesis of psychological phenomena. All these points were to be taken up again later on, in accordance with a more prudent and safer method. But at last the questions had been raised, and often with remarkable clearness and pertinency, so that the influence of Condillac upon French thought was long-lived and persistent. To-day it would not be impossible to find traces of it in what is taught in our schools.

CHAPTER X.

CONDORCET.

TOWARDS the end of the eighteenth century the rapid progress of the sciences presaged a general revolution of opinions. Not only had mathematics gained by the impulsion given in the early years of the century, but also physics, chemistry, and above all, the natural or biological sciences, had developed wonderfully. Not to mention the French mathematicians, astronomers, physicists, and physiologists who rivalled Bradley, Bernoulli, Euler, Haller, and Franklin, natural history was revived by Buffon and Jussieu, who extended it beyond the narrow sphere within which specialists had hitherto confined it. By laying before the public the great questions on natural history they became valuable auxiliaries to the "philosophers," even when refusing to be considered as allies.

This is particularly true of Buffon, who was led by the plan of his great work to treat of "the general theory of the globe we live on, the distribution, nature, and formation of the substances it presents to our view, the great phenomena which occur on its surface or within its bosom; the history of man and the laws which preside over his development, life, and destruction. . . . "

Among these problems, which Buffon looked upon as unquestionably belonging to natural history, there are a good many which only a century earlier belonged to theology. The change wrought in men's minds was therefore nothing else than a revolution. Theology was henceforward confined within its own domain; even metaphysics was no longer in good standing, and little was accepted under that name beyond psychological and moral researches, or at the utmost a remnant of speculation on the existence of God and the nature of the soul. Everywhere else the scientific spirit asserted its supremacy. Constant use was made of positive methods, mathematical formulæ and analysis, whenever the phenomena admitted of them; and the experimental processes applied to the study of the genesis and formation of animate and inanimate things. To analyse, to trace things back to their origins, was the very spirit of the age which after having struggled in the first half of the century had become victorious in the latter half.

We find a rather striking picture of this great movement in the *Éloges*, written by Condorcet for the Academy of Sciences after 1782. Condorcet was a true son of the age, and a grateful son. An enthusiastic admirer of Voltaire, a friend of Turgot and D'Alembert, imbued with the ideas of Condillac, of the Encyclopædists, and even, on some points, of Rousseau, perpetual secretary of the Academy of Sciences, and introduced into the French Academy with the help of the "philos-

ophers," Condorcet showed even in what he wrote before the Revolution what he was to be when fully developed in his last and most important work, the *Esquisse d'un Tableau des Progrès de l'Esprit Humain:* a passionate upholder of the philosophy of his time, convinced that under its guidance humanity was on the way to happiness. His faith was so immovable that, when outlawed and threatened with death, his last words were to be a rapturous hymn to progress as attained by means of reason and science. Being an acute-minded and remarkably well-informed man, he combined with over-sanguine hopes and previsions a clear and precise insight into the social evils of his time and the means of remedying them. By considering the body of his leading ideas we can draw up a summary balance-sheet, so to speak, of the philosophy of the eighteenth century in France, on the eve of the day when the Revolution was to put it to the severe test of facts.

According to Condorcet the proper object of philosophy is man, and, secondarily, the totality of the actual in proportion as it concerns man's development and happiness. Such a conception may be narrow or it may be wide; narrow, if we purposely exclude all researches in which we do not perceive man's immediate profit; wide, if on the contrary we start from the principle that all things in the universe are mutually dependent, and that consequently the science of man is inseparable from

the study of the totality of the actual. Condorcet stood half-way between these two extremes. True, he had but little inclination for metaphysics. Although he would not regard as invariable the limits assigned by Locke to the human mind, and although he considered the questions of the simplicity, the immortality, and the liberty of the human soul, he did not deviate notably from his contemporaries' point of view. "True metaphysics" is to him, as to them, only the application of reasoning to the facts observed in reflecting upon our sensations, our ideas, and our feelings.

But on the other hand, he has no narrowly utilitarian conception of positive science. He understands that to seek immediate utility would be to destroy the deep source of it. The most useful theories practically are composed of propositions which were discovered by curiosity alone, and which long remained useless, while no one dreamed how they could one day cease to be so. The chain of truths which spring from each other, and which can be successively discovered only with the aid of newly-discovered methods, bears no relation to the series of truths which are also to become, one after another, practically useful. A discovery is not made because it is needed, but because it is linked to other truths already known, and because we become at last strong enough to overleap the space between it and us. Let us then be wary lest under pretence of reducing the sciences to their lowest

terms we should countenance ignorance, the greatest bane of mankind and the cause of nearly all our misfortunes.

Conceived in this way, positive science (the principles of which Condorcet has indeed no intention of examining) will supply a more or less rapid but a certain solution of the main problems which puzzle mankind. Man at the present time is wicked and miserable. But his vices, as well as his sufferings, proceed solely from ignorance and error, both of which science will dissipate. The true use of science, therefore, does not consist in its application to the arts, or at least this is but a small part of its utility. Its most important benefit is perhaps that it has destroyed prejudices, and rectified, after a fashion, our human intelligence. All political and moral errors originate in philosophical errors, which in their turn are connected with physical errors. There is not a religious system or a piece of supernatural extravagance which does not rest upon ignorance of natural laws. The progress of physical knowledge is all the more fatal to such errors because it often destroys them without even seeming to attack them.

Thus do we owe to Greece an eternal debt of gratitude. The philosophers of Athens, Miletus, Syracuse, and Alexandria have made it possible for the inhabitants of modern Europe to excel all other men. Had Xerxes been victorious at Salamis, we might still be barbarians. That battle is one of those events, so rare in history, in which the for-

tone of a single day determines for a long series of centuries the destiny of mankind. Fortunately the danger incurred in the fifth century B.C. no longer threatens us. Barbarism over the entire globe is no longer possible. Printing has forever saved mankind from such a danger. We shall witness no more "disastrous" epochs, such as the Middle Ages were. Science not only frees, but it guarantees the man it has freed against any aggressive return of ignorance and barbarism.

We are thus brought to the central idea of Condorcet's philosophy, which is the idea of progress and of indefinite perfectibility. The expression of this thought constantly recurs in his works, confident, eager, enthusiastic as a hallelujah. Every century shall bring with it new discoveries and new instruments for discovery; and even as Aladdin's lamp made better those who possessed it and made a good use of it, the progress of science shall be accompanied by the melioration of mankind. "My aim," says Condorcet, in the beginning of the *Esquisse*, "is to show, by the aid both of reasoning and of facts, that no boundaries have been set to the improvement of the human faculties; that man's perfectibility is really indefinite; and that his progress, now independent of any opposing power, has no limit not coincident with that of the globe on which fate has cast him." Even our bodily organism will be perfected. With better hygiene, more sanitary houses, a more thorough

knowledge of the animal frame, the duration of life may be increased. Death would be but the result of extraordinary accidents, or of the ever later destruction of the vital forces.

The idea thus coming to its full development in Condorcet had its roots in the philosophy of the whole century. Condorcet merely drew conclusions from principles which had been universally accepted. How often had it been said that everything is acquired; that everything comes from experience; that between the primitive man and the man of the present day there is a wide distance, and that this distance has been covered by man with the help of his own sole powers! But if these have been able to lead him up to the point where he is now, how far may they not lead him in the future! What may not be expected from a rational system of education? Helvetius dreams that by this means we may obtain "men of genius" at will. Condorcet entertains the hope that all men will thus be made wise and benevolent. All "philosophers" agreed in saying that nature "begins aright" and that if man "continues badly," the fault is with him, and not with her. It is for him, therefore, to amend himself, and to rid himself of his errors, prejudices and vices. In one word, this philosophy reduced to nothing the factor of innateness, instinct and heredity in man. As a necessary consequence, it expected everything from education instruction and laws, and on his basis looked forward to unlimited progress.

It is true, we are wanting in information as to the prehistoric life of mankind. We can only guess the steps by which man, when isolated, or rather limited to such association as was necessary for reproduction, was able to make that primitive progress, the final term of which was articulate language. It is only by examining man's intellectual and moral faculties and physical constitution, that we can conjecture how he rose to this first stage of civilisation. At least the hypothesis thus formed is not contradicted by facts. Moreover, according to Condorcet man is naturally good. Though indifferent to good and evil while pursuing his own interest, he has yet a natural feeling of pity and benevolence, a necessary consequence of his constitution, which inclines him towards kindness and justice to his fellow-creatures. This feeling always works in the same direction, whereas self-interest counsels most various actions, so that this feeling of good-will exercises in the end a considerable influence upon the conduct of men, thus contributing to the progress of civilisation.

Whence comes it, then, that there are still so many wicked and miserable men? Condorcet does not deny the fact, but would not have it exaggerated. Humanity has already advanced far beyond the animal nature from which originally it could scarcely be distinguished. If ignorance and errors still occasion a great many evils, it is because nothing is so difficult as to destroy deeply-rooted prejudices, of which mankind contracted in its childhood a vast number, and also because there have long

been classes of men whose interest was served by maintaining these prejudices, especially priests, of whom Condorcet speaks much as Voltaire and D'Alembert did. But mankind will eventually be cured; it cannot fail to be cured. Superstitions and other errors will fade away before the light of science. "It would be necessary only to enlighten people upon their real interests, and a very few simple truths would suffice to establish the happiness of mankind on a solid basis."

While indulging in most sanguine hopes for the future progress of the sciences, it was difficult for Condorcet to foretell in what this progress would consist, and he was wise enough not to attempt it. He contented himself with pointing out the general order of their evolution, according to which the simpler the facts to be studied, the speedier and surer will be the progress of the science. Thus astronomy was created first, and physiology last. Beyond physiology, he had a glimpse of sociology. Social phenomena were among his most habitual themes for reflexion. He understood that these phenomena, like all others, must be subjected to laws, the knowledge of which depended upon the observation of facts, and that this knowledge might become a science which like all others would make prophetic predictions possible. "The only foundation of belief in the natural sciences is the idea that the general laws, whether known or unknown, which regulate all phenomena in the universe, are

necessary and unchanging. Wherefore should this principle be less true as regards the development of man's moral and intellectual faculties than as regards other natural operations?" Condorcet even dimly foresaw, but without dwelling upon it, the distinction between social statics and dynamics, and the preponderating importance of dynamics. On the other hand, he took up the bold idea of applying mathematical analysis to social phenomena. He thought he had thus found a most effective and fruitful use of the theory of probabilities.

Together with social science, and with its aid, social art, which is the supreme object of philosophers, is to be developed and devoted to making all men free, reasonable, and happy. First free, for the better enlightened men are, the freer they are. This proposition, Condorcet says, has the value of an axiom. According to the natural order of things "political enlightenment is the immediate sequence of the progress of the sciences." But this truth must be published cautiously, and Condorcet highly praises the philosophers for having quieted as much as possible the suspicions of princes. "Let us not," he says, "challenge the oppressors to league themselves together against reason; let us carefully conceal from them the close and inevitable connexion between enlightenment and liberty; let us not teach them beforehand that a nation free from prejudice soon becomes a free nation." The throne must not know that its interest lies in supporting the altar.

Again, in order that the progress of enlightenment may produce favorable results, the progress must be general, and all men must share it. Condorcet here ventures to contradict his master, Voltaire. The latter was wrong, he says, in speaking scornfully of "the mob," and in thinking with his friend Frederick II. that "the stupid populace" has no need of enlightenment. Too long has intellectual and moral culture been exclusively the privilege of a minority, while the ignorant mass lies sunk in ignorance and prejudices. In any well-governed country the people will have time to acquire instruction and the few needed ideas to guide them according to reason. There must be public education, extending to all classes of society, offering to all children not so much a systematic course of instruction as the first elements of every science useful to all men, and giving to every one a survey of the various objects of knowledge. Society is interested in this, for in this way no man born to genius can be lost to society, and moreover it would be insured against the danger of seeing new prejudices constantly succeeding the old ones. But above all such an education would make men reasonable and happy by acquainting them with their rights, duties, and interests.

Trained by science and by the use of his reason, man learns that "his rights are written down in the book of nature." It was formerly to sacred books, to the bulls of the popes, to the rescripts of kings, to collections of customs, to the annals of

the church that men used to turn for maxims and examples from which they might draw conclusions. It is now well known, and has been declared by the American republic and by France first in the Old World, that reason is sufficient to show us the rights of man. These are all derived from the very simple maxim that, given two sentient beings, created equal by nature, it is against the natural order that one of them should seek his own happiness at the expense of the other. The question now becomes to establish on principles derived from reason alone, a system of laws insuring to man the enjoyment of the advantages procured for him by the social state, while taking from him as few of his natural rights as possible.

Now most men are in fact far from enjoying their natural rights. Even where there are no longer any special privileges, where the equality of men is recognised before the law, the extreme disparity of fortunes very often makes the possession of natural rights a vain show. Of what use is the nominal enjoyment of these rights to a poor wretch dying of misery and starvation? Therefore we must found pension funds for old people and annuities for widows and orphans. A certain capital will be supplied to the young when old enough to work for themselves; popular credit societies will be established. These and many other institutions of the same kind, which may be formed in the name of society and become one of its greatest benefits, may also be the results of private associations.

Penal laws will cease to be a revolting anachronism in a society the manners of which are refined. Torture will disappear. The death penalty will be abolished. Natural children will be treated with humanity and justice; girl-mothers will not be driven to despair and crime; and, finally, we shall have a new jurisprudence, freed from the idle trash with which the prejudices of a score of nations and a score of centuries have loaded our law.

All these improvements will take place as education, guided by the social art, makes men better acquainted with their real interests. The improvement of laws, attending upon that of sciences, will bring together and often identify the private interests of each man with the common interests of all. There is no reason why the opposition between these interests, though now a violent one, should last forever. Man is naturally good. It is sufficient to impart to him gentle and pure morals, to enlighten his conscience, to prevent the laws from creating artificial opposition between the direct interests of individuals, but to cause them to develop and strengthen man's natural inclination to make his own happiness dependent on the happiness of others, and lastly, to prompt him to feel towards mean, unjust, or cruel deeds a somewhat organic and reflex dislike. Reason must form laws, and laws must modify men's manners.

Men will soon understand that national interests are no more incompatible with one another than

private interests are. According to Condorcet there cannot exist, especially in a large empire, any truly national interest that is not merged in the general interest of mankind. All the causes which produce, embitter, and perpetuate national feuds will gradually vanish. Wars between nations, like murders, will be numbered among the extraordinary atrocities, humiliating and revolting to nature.

One may recognise here the dream of universal fraternity, the humane optimism in which the eighteenth century at its close used to indulge. But such optimism did not make philosophers blind to the present state of misery, and their openly avowed hopes were one of their forms of protest against the established code of morals and laws. This philosophy, as we have already seen, was above all an offensive weapon. The war it waged is far from closed; thence the discrepancy among the opinions concerning it even at the present day. According to some it is a poor, narrow, paltry philosophy. It understood nothing about the history of mankind, and was a stranger to all religious feeling, insensible to the poetry of nature, intoxicated with the progress of science, and practically leading to frightful excesses. According to others it is the philosophy of a great age; it drew conclusions from the principles discovered or rehabilitated by the Renaissance and the Reformation; it restored to man the consciousness of his individual dignity and responsibility; it was passionately fond of justice and

humanity; and, though it was wrong in believing problems too simple, and in accepting too hasty solutions, at least it disposed once for all of the former social conception of inequality among men, and with the subjection of reason to theology. A weighty case which has not yet been completely settled!

CHAPTER XI.

THE IDEOLOGISTS—THE TRADITIONALISTS.

CONDORCET belonged to a group of philosophers who, under the Republic, the Consulate and the Empire, upheld the spirit and methods of the eighteenth century, and who gave themselves the name of "Ideologists." Their doctrine has generally been judged with excessive severity. It has been represented as the tail of Condillacism; this philosophy, it is said, already narrow as it came from its founder, became more and more thin and poor in the hands of the Ideologists, until it was reduced to a mere theory of knowledge, semi-psychological and semi-logical, devoid of originality and with no hold on men's minds. This picture is very much exaggerated; to be convinced of this, we need only remember how strong was Napoleon's anxiety to stop the mouths of "those ideologists." He would not have taken the trouble, had their philosophy really been so insignificant.

According to Destutt de Tracy, who is, together with Cabanis, the most noteworthy of the Ideologists, we cannot know the beginning of anything, neither that of men, nor that of the universe. Questions of origin are unanswerable. What was formerly called metaphysics is the most shallow thing in the

world. Researches on the nature of the soul or on the first principle of things are inevitably vain. Whether we examine the phenomena within or without ourselves, all that we may hope to accomplish is to acquire a deeper and deeper knowledge of the laws of nature. The proper object of philosophy, or ideology, is to study what takes place in us when we think, speak, or reason. It then becomes the basis of ethics, economics, legislation and the other moral sciences.

Ideology recognizes as its founder Condillac, who first clearly propounded the problem of the origin of our knowledge, and pointed out a suitable method for its solution. But from the outset Destutt de Tracy differs with him. He does not admit that attention is a mere transformed sensation, and consequently rejects the whole genesis of understanding and will as conceived by Condillac. He propounds another theory according to which there are four faculties of the soul, and only four: sensibility, memory, judgment and volition, which he calls four irreducible "modes of sensation."

Condillac ascribed to the active sense of touch the acquisition of the idea of something outside ourselves. De Tracy shows the explanation to be insufficient, and felicitously completes it: "When a being organized so as to will and feel, feels within him volition and action, and at the same time resistance against this action willed and felt by him, he is assured of his own existence, and of the existence of something that is not himself. Action willed and

felt on the one hand, and resistance on the other hand—these are the links between our *self* and other beings, between beings that feel and beings that are felt." Any other sensation than this, commencing or terminating independently of our will, would be powerless to give us this idea. De Tracy is here nearer to Maine de Biran than to Condillac. In a similar way, in his *Logique*, Tracy does not admit, with Condillac, that our judgments are equations, that our reasonings are series of equations, and that ideas compared in a judgment or in right reasoning are *identical*. We must say, on the contrary, that equations are a kind of judgment; and even in equations, the ideas compared together are not *identical* but *equivalent*.

De Tracy is a clear, sincere, and vigorous mind, holding firmly to the principles of the eighteenth century philosophy, and not shrinking from any consequences of these principles. The French Revolution, to which he nearly fell a victim, did not shake his convictions. He will not admit that a true doctrine may be immoral or dangerous for society, and claims entire liberty for philosophical research. Even morality is concerned in this liberty. For moral principles are not innate, whatever Voltaire may have said to the contrary. It is a very ancient and absurd error to believe that moral principles are in some sort injected into our heads, and the same in every head, and to be led by this dream to attribute to them a more celestial origin than to all other ideas which exist in our understanding. Moral

science is of our own making, as all others are, and similarly built up of the results of our experience and reflection. But it is subordinate to a knowledge of human nature, and the latter in its turn "depends upon the state of physics, of which it is but a part." So, though for his own part he made use of a purely psychological method, De Tracy did not, in theory, separate the moral from the natural sciences. Accordingly he said that ideology was a part of zoölogy, or of animal physics, and dedicated his *Logique* to his friend Cabanis, the celebrated author of the *Rapports du Physique et du Moral.*

Cabanis has been looked upon as a materialist, but without sufficient reason, for he purposely abstains from expressing any metaphysical opinion. Like De Tracy he declares that first causes are not an object of science, not even an object of doubt, and that on this point we are in a state of hopeless ignorance. But from an experimental point of view he ascertains that the brain is to thought what the stomach is to digestion. As impressions reach the brain they excite it to activity, just as food, when it enters the stomach, stimulates in it a secretion of the gastric juice. The proper function of the one is to perceive each particular impression, to attach signs to it, to combine and compare together the different impressions, and to form therefrom judgments and determinations, just as the function of the other is to act upon nutritious substances. From this Cabanis derives the notorious formula: "The brain in some sort digests impres-

sions; it produces an organic secretion of thought;" a comparison which may be regarded as more or less happy, but which is meant to be nothing but a comparison.

By dint of psychological abstraction, it seemed to have been forgotten that man is, to use Bossuet's words, a natural whole, composed of a soul and a body. Cabanis comes back to this idea. Being at the same time a physician and a psychologist, he shows, by the aid of several hundred observations made upon man, both in health and sickness, the reciprocal action of the body upon the mind and of the mind upon the body. The physiology of Cabanis is now quite out of date, but few have spoken better than he of the influence of age, sex, temperament, illness, diet, climate on the formation of ideas and of moral affections.

If there are so many points of contact between the physical and the moral being, it is because they rest on a common basis. The operations called "moral," as well as the physical ones, result directly from the action either of certain particular organs or of the whole of the living system. All phenomena pertaining to intelligence and will take their rise in the primitive or accidental state of the organism as well as the other vital functions. The diversity of functions is no reason why principles should be multiplied. As we do not assume a special principle for digestion, another for the circulation of the blood, another for respiration, etc., neither must we assume one for the intellectual

functions. It is sufficient to recognize that all functions, whether moral or physical, originate in sensibility, a property common to all living organisms. Indeed, physical sensibility is on the one hand the utmost limit that we reach in the study of the phenomena of life, and in the methodical investigation of their connection; and it is also on the other hand the most general principle discovered by the analysis of the intellectual faculties and the affections of the soul. Thus the physical and the moral life meet at their source, or rather, the moral being is but the physical being considered from certain special points of view. The only principle of the phenomena of animal existence is, therefore, the power of sensation. But what is the cause of this power, what is its essence? Philosophers will not ask this question. Sensibility is the universal fact in living nature. We can not get beyond it.

When Cabanis finds in his path any of Condillac's theories that are incompatible with the results of his own researches, he does not hesitate to reject them. Thus, Condillac maintained that there are no psychological phenomena unperceived by consciousness. Nothing, says Cabanis, is more contrary to experience. Although it is a fact that the consciousness of impressions always implies the existence and action of sensibility, the latter is, nevertheless, alive in many parts where the *self* nowise perceives its presence; it nevertheless determines a great many important and regular functions, though the *self* is not at all aware of its

action. There may be sensibility without sensation, i. e., without an impression perceived.

Condillac said everything is acquired, even instinct. The paradox was bold, and Joseph de Maistre did not fail to laugh at it. Cabanis looks upon instinct as innate, and infers therefrom that external sensations are not, as Condillac declared, the sole principle of all mental life. Moral ideas and determinations do not depend solely upon what are called sensations, that is, distinct impressions received by the organs of the senses properly so called. The impressions resulting from the functions of several internal organs contribute to them more or less, and, in certain cases, appear to be the sole cause of their production. There is within us a whole system of inclinations and determinations formed by impressions almost totally unconnected with those of the external world; and these inclinations necessarily influence our way of considering objects, the direction of our researches concerning them, and our judgment of them. It is not, therefore, the external world alone that shapes the thoughts and desires of the "*self*"; it is rather the latter, pre-formed by instinct and by specific dispositions, that builds for itself an external world with the elements of reality that interest it. Likewise, spontaneous activity precedes in us reflective activity. We are first determined to act without being aware of the means we employ, and often without even having conceived a precise idea of the end we desire to attain.

The consideration of instinct naturally leads to that of final causes. Cabanis admires the mutual dependency of all parts in living bodies, and is not surprised that observers of nature "who were not close thinkers" should have been deeply affected by it. But in truth, these marvels are inseparable from the very organization of animals. One may recognize them, and even extol them with all the magnificence of language, without being forced to admit in the causes anything that does not belong to the necessary conditions of every existence. What seems to us finality is merely the result of natural laws, inasmuch as they make possible the appearance, propagation and permanence of living species; if this ordering of parts, which we think wonderful and intentional, should cease to exist, living beings would disappear. So that, even when the naturalist has recourse to final causes, the philosopher cannot without imprudence seek in them an argument in favor of beliefs concerning the author of nature. But such reserve must be very difficult to adhere to, since Cabanis, who recommends it, does not himself observe it. In his *Lettre à Fauriel sur les Causes Premières*, published after his death, Cabanis inclines toward a conception of nature akin to that of the Stoics, in which ideas of order and finality occupy a predominant place.

Cabanis has been widely read, and still deserves to be, were it only for the abundance and the choice of the facts he brought together, the justness of most of his reflections, and the pleasing elegance of

his style. His influence extended not only to philosophers like Maine de Biran, Auguste Comte, H. Taine, but also to novelists like Stendhal and his successors. Yet he has not escaped the disrepute which overtook ideology. Metaphysics, reviving, threw into the shade those philosophers who had thought it finally banished. The Ideologists had followed the way opened by the Encyclopædists and the scientific men of the eighteenth century, and were the first victims of a reaction which aimed higher than at them.

The name given to the traditionalist philosophers exactly indicates the position they assumed over against the eighteenth century. To a body of doctrines, the common characteristic of which was that they were based on the independent effort of individual reason, they opposed a doctrine which discovered truth in tradition, and particularly in tradition that is universally found among men, viz.: religious tradition. Shall we say that this is not a philosophical doctrine, but the very negative of philosophy? Were this true, such a negation was at least grounded on philosophical reasons, that is to say, on a criticism of the opposing principles. No doubt the Traditionalists thought that they, as Christians, possessed the truth at the outset, before any discussion. But they nevertheless meant to combat the "philosophers" on their own ground, to unmask their sophistries, to refute their errors, and finally to compel them, by sheer force of demonstration,

to confess the weakness of individual reason. De Bonald, De Maistre, the two most illustrious representatives of this school, were looked upon by all their contemporaries as formidable logicians, and in the judgment of Auguste Comte, for instance, De Maistre dealt the philosophy of the eighteenth century some most telling blows.

Wherever this philosophy had seen "nature," De Bonald sees "God." Nature to him is a vague and equivocal expression, and can not stand for a real cause. Nature is rather an effect, a system of effects, a set of laws; but these laws imply a legislator who founded the system and who maintains it. The universe is unintelligible to him without a Creator who is at the same time a Providence. Language, likewise, was attributed by the eighteenth century philosophers (Rousseau excepted) to the invention of men. This also is an untenable theory, all the more absurd as these philosophers understood perfectly well that language is inseparable from thought and social life. Men never could have invented language, had they not already lived in society; and they never could have lived in society, had they not already possessed language. You can not, De Bonald claims, get out of this circle, unless you admit this marvel (for language is no less marvelous than the organism of living beings), to be a gift from the Creator to rational beings. And it is the same with all similar questions. The philosophy of the eighteenth century looks back in the series of causes up to a certain point, where it

stops, thinking it has reached the fundamental principle; but this so-called principle explains nothing, and must in its turn be explained. Religion alone, which is a deeper sort of philosophy, attains to the first principle on which all things depend.

Truth is therefore to be found in tradition. The pride of individual reason, which has despised this tradition, inevitably leads to error. Even such a well-balanced mind as that of Montesquieu did not escape it. All his theory of constitutions is false. Modern philosophy, says De Bonald, is the wisdom of man and not that of society; that is to say, the wisdom of the depraved man and not that of the social or perfect man; it tries to make the intelligent man turn to natural religion. But this philosophical religion, the pure worship of Divinity, of the Great Being, of the Being of Beings, in a word, theism, infallibly leads to atheism, as the philosophical government of political societies, the division and balance of power in the state, or representative government, inevitably leads to anarchy.

It is a mistake for man to assume the task of constituting society or establishing government. His intervention can only spoil the work of Providence. It is society, on the contrary, which, being founded on necessary relations, that is, relations established by God, *constitutes* the individual man, and dictates the rules that must govern his conduct.

The same leading ideas are expressed by Joseph de Maistre, but with such eloquence and passion as

to have made them wonderfully impressive. The eighteenth century, according to him, is one of the most shameful epochs in the history of the human mind. Its philosophy is a most degrading and fatal system. It has robbed reason of her wings and made her grovel like a filthy reptile; it has dried up the divine source of poetry and eloquence, and caused all the moral sciences to perish. And why did it produce these frightful effects? Because this whole philosophy was nothing but a veritable system of practical atheism. To pronounce the name of God in its presence would throw it into convulsions. It was the work of the "Evil One," it was "the denying spirit," like Mephistopheles. Moreover, according to De Maistre, the eighteenth century merely applied to politics the principles of the Reformation, or, as he says, of the "rebels" of the sixteenth century. The sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries might be called the premises of the eighteenth, which in fact was but the conclusion of the two preceding ones. "The human mind could not suddenly have risen to such a pitch of audacity as we have witnessed. . . . Philosophism could not have been erected except on the broad foundation of the Reformation."

The hostility of De Maistre is clear-sighted, and he struck home when he pointed out the inconsistency of those philosophers who praised so highly the experimental method, yet had not patience enough to practice it, so anxious were they to substitute something for the traditions they were pull-

ing down. "It was a singularly ridiculous trait of the eighteenth century to judge of everything according to abstract rules, without regard to experience; and it is the more strikingly ridiculous because this very century at the same time kept continually sparring at all philosophers who took abstract principles as their starting point, instead of first looking for them in the light of experience." Every one of the "philosophers" in turn is roughly handled by De Maistre. I do not speak of Voltaire, against whom he feels a sort of fury which almost overpowers him; but Locke, whom the philosophers all hailed as master, is no longer "the wise Locke," the "greatest of all philosophers since Plato;" he is a short-sighted, narrow-minded man, not wicked, but simple, shallow, spiritless, a poor philosopher, a mere pigmy beside the "Christian Plato," that is, Malebranche, who has been sacrificed to him. The infatuation of which he has been the object is simply ludicrous. The same is said of Bacon, whom De Maistre honors with a special indictment. His dislike is no less for Condillac, "who sees the truth perfectly well, but who had rather die than confess it;" an odious writer, perhaps the one of all the philosophers of the eighteenth century who was most on his guard against his own conscience.

These philosophers tried to persuade individual reason that it was the sovereign judge of what is false and what is true, that the progress of mankind depended upon that of the sciences, and that ignor-

ance and superstition were the causes of moral and social evil. De Maistre denies all this as confidently as they asserted it. He disparages reason as much as they exalted it. Reason, he declares, stands manifestly convicted of incompetence as a guide for men, for few men are in a fit state to reason well, and none can reason well on all subjects; so that, generally speaking, it is advisable to begin with authority. "I do not mean to insult reason," says De Maistre; "I have infinite respect for it in spite of all the wrong it has done us; but whenever it stands in opposition to common sense, we must put it from us like poison." And, indeed, the general feeling of all men forms "a system of intuitive truths" against which the sophistries of reason cannot prevail. It is a "mysterious instinct" which we are bound to obey. This instinct often guesses aright, even in the natural sciences; it is almost infallible in dealing with rational philosophy, ethics, metaphysics, and natural theology, "and it is infinitely worthy of the supreme wisdom, which created and regulated all things, to have enabled man to dispense with science in all that most greatly concerns him."

Science! that is the source from which proceed dangerous extravagancies, rash self-assumption and proud blasphemy. Not that it is bad in itself; but it must be pursued only under certain indispensable conditions. For want of this precaution the more things our mind knows the more guilty it may be. Bacon is quite "ludicrous" when he is provoked

at scholasticism and theology. Teach young people physics and chemistry before having imbued them with religion and morality, and you will see the result. There lurks in science, when it is not entirely subordinate to "national dogmas," a something which tends to debase man and to make him a useless or bad citizen.

Science is not and ought not to be the chief aim of the intelligence. Whence come, for instance, the multiplied complaints, and, one might say, revilings against Providence? From this great phalanx of men called scientists, whom we have not in this century been able to keep in their proper place, which is a subordinate one. In former times there were very few men of science, and among these few only a very small number were impious. Now they are legion, and the exception has become the rule. They have usurped a boundless influence. Yet it is not for science to guide men. Nothing really essential is entrusted to it. Science is an intellectual pastime, and in the material order of things it is capable of useful applications; but there its domain ends. "It belongs to the prelates, the nobles, the higher officers of the state to be the depositories and guardians of saving truths, to teach nations what is wrong and what is right, what is true and what is false, in the moral and spiritual worlds. Others have no right to reason on such matters. They have the natural sciences to divert themselves with; of what can they complain? As to the man who speaks or writes in

order to take away from the people a national dogma, he ought to be hanged as one who robs the hearth and home.

It would be difficult to carry the reaction against the favorite ideas of the eighteenth century further. Yet De Maistre is in this not merely obeying the desire to restore the rights of tradition and religious authority and to abate the chimerical and sinful pretensions of such men as Helvetius and Condorcet. He founds his opinion also on a conception of the universe and its relation to God, which leaves to positive science but limited scope and range. The world of visible phenomena and of the laws which regulate them is a world of appearance and illusion which hides from our sight the world of true and essential reality. Therefore, the closer our science grasps phenomena and their laws, the farther it is, with all its air of truth, from being really true; or, at least, it is only imperfectly and comparatively true, like the appearances which are its object. The religious man who sees God everywhere in the world; the poet, moved by the beauty of the universe and by the tragic character of human destiny; even the metaphysician who discovers the invisible beneath the visible, are all three infinitely nearer to truth, harmony and the eternal substance than the man of science measuring and weighing atoms in his laboratory.

Consequently De Maistre has a constant tendency to explain nothing by secondary causes, and always to appeal to mystery and God's unfathom-

able designs. He gives an admirable description of the struggle for life, and of the competition between living species; he sees clearly that war is a particular phase of this great fact; but instead of seeking the cause, as Diderot or Darwin did, in the general laws of nature, he sees in it simply a "divine" law, and founds thereupon a whole theory of sacrifice. "The earth, continually deluged with blood, is only an immense altar, on which all that has life must be slain, and that without end or measure or rest, till the end of all things, till the death of death." He likewise insists upon the mutual responsibility of all the members of one family, and of all the members of mankind, and upon the reversibility of penalties; but instead of seeking the origin of these beliefs in the constitution and religion of primitive societies, he sees here again a "divine" law. The words superstition and prejudice are to him meaningless. God's directing hand is everywhere in the world; if we do not see it, it is because we *refuse to do so*. A family is thought to be royal because it reigns; whereas, on the contrary, it reigns because it is royal.

We shall not set forth here De Maistre's ideas on the spiritual sovereignty of the pope, the significance of the French Revolution, and the constitution best suited for modern nations. We must lose no time in returning to more properly philosophical doctrines. But more than once, in these doctrines, shall we observe unquestionable traces which prove the influence of the chief Traditional-

ists, De Maistre, De Bonald, Ballanche and Lamennais. De Maistre, especially, made upon many minds a deep and lasting impression. Even if Auguste Comte had not formally acknowledged the fact, his very doctrine would be sufficient to prove his indebtedness to De Maistre for many of his historical, social and religious ideas.

CHAPTER XII.

MAINE DE BIRAN, COUSIN, AND ECLECTICISM

MAINE DE BIRAN was said by Cousin to have been the first of French metaphysicians since Malebranche. This is true, especially, if we understand by a metaphysician, as they did in the eighteenth century, a thinker who studies the origin of our knowledge and the genesis of our ideas. Yet this original and deep philosopher was but little known to his contemporaries. Maine de Biran, though he wrote much, published but little during his lifetime, and what he gave to the world was not sufficient to make his thought fully understood. It was Cousin, who, in 1834, and afterwards in 1841, edited part of the manuscripts left by Maine de Biran. Since then other unpublished works have been edited, chiefly by M. Naville. If we have not yet the whole of Maine de Biran's writings, we possess enough to feel assured that no essential part of his doctrine now escapes us.

Maine de Biran never taught. Being a life-guardsman to Louis the Sixteenth in 1789, and later sub-prefect and councillor of State, if he was also a philosopher it was in virtue of a strong natural aptitude and inclination. A sort of instinct irresistibly impelled him to make a study of him-

self. His health being delicate, he was watchful of the slightest changes in his physical condition and in his consciousness due to surrounding circumstances, and was consequently predisposed to introspection. "When one has little vitality," he writes, "or but a faint conscious sense of vitality, one is more inclined to observe internal phenomena. This is why I became so early in life a psychologist." He heard the springs of the machine creaking, and he felt his thought straining or slackening with them.

His taste for psychology first found food in Condillac, and then in the Ideologists. He became acquainted with Cabanis, and was afterwards his friend; and though later he thought that he had advanced beyond his doctrine, he never completely rejected it. But he also read the Genevese Charles Bonnet, and it was probably by him that he was led to study the philosophy of Leibniz, and to seek a psychological interpretation of it that would be in harmony with his own tendencies. It was at this time that he wrote his *Mémoire sur l'Habitude* (1805), an original and thoughtful work, which, under a form that suggests Condillac, already manifests many of his own personal and independent views. In the next period he reached the clearest expression of his thought and expounded what he looked upon as his most important theory, to wit, the theory of effort, or of the first fact of consciousness. In this he was seconded by his friend Ampère, the celebrated physicist, whose philosoph-

ical work is inseparable from his own. He often enunciated his ideas at philosophical meetings held at his house in Paris. Royer-Collard was wont to be present, and also "young Professor Cousin," who comprehended the thought of Maine de Biran marvelously well. In later years, when ill, and anxious to find "a firm and steady prop," Maine de Biran inclined towards a mystical and religious kind of philosophy; and he had yielded himself fully to it before the end of his life.

Condillac's psychology had separated, so to speak, consciousness from organism. Convinced that "we never get out of ourselves," he thought himself thus justified in studying only what reflection and analysis can reach and decompose within ourselves. Now this is an abstraction which Maine de Biran constantly finds to be contradicted by his personal experience. Our humor changes, our attention flags, our self-confidence disappears or returns without our knowing how; is it not because a multitude of dim sensations are produced within us, of which we are made aware only by their effects? Thus experimental psychology can as yet describe only the smallest portion of the soul's phenomena. This science begins with clear apperception, and with the distinction between the "self" and its modifications. But how many things take place in the soul before, during, and after the first consciousness of the self, which will never come within the range of our knowledge!

These things Maine de Biran calls pure impressions, or simple impressions; they constitute the "affective life." They correspond to Leibniz's dim and insensible perceptions; or, perhaps more exactly, to Cabanis's "sensibility." "These impersonal sensations, which I shall term pure affections, may be considered as the most immediate results of functions that underlie a general organic life . . . . . a state previous even to the birth of a conscious and thinking subject." This was a fruitful thought, which experimental psychology has turned to excellent account in our days. This science admits as a principle, as Maine de Biran did, that "simple impressions may constitute an absolute sort of existence, *sui generis*, apart from any distinct personality or consciousness of self. M. Pierre Janet, for instance, has returned to this hypothesis in order to explain many surprising cases of hysterical anæsthesia and amnesia, of twofold personality, etc.

This part of ourselves which escapes our knowledge also escapes our power. The affective life is independent of our will, though our will depends upon it. It is a purely passive basis of our complex being, from which the ego can never be separated, and which becomes tense or slack or altered without our being able to interfere, at any rate directly; a sum of organic dispositions we are the less able to modify since they are the very source of our powers and volitions. They result from our temperament, and what we call character is but the

physiognomy of temperament—a striking phrase, for which we are indebted to Bichat, the physiologist, and which Maine de Biran made his own by exploring it thoroughly.

At about the same epoch Schopenhauer in Germany was saying the same thing; and though he was in nowise acquainted with the works of Maine de Biran, there is in this more than a mere fortuitous coincidence. Between Schopenhauer's psychology and that of Maine de Biran there lie hidden, under obvious differences, deep analogies. If little attention has hitherto been paid in France to this fact, it is because of a predisposition to see in Maine de Biran one of the founders of contemporary spiritualism,—and he is therefore associated with Cousin rather than with Bichat or Cabanis.

But this interpretation, while not false, is certainly incomplete, and not in harmony with history. Maine de Biran owes nothing to Cousin, and was, especially in his two earlier periods, imbued with the doctrines of Bichat and of "the immortal author of the *Rapports du Physique et du Moral.*" Now this was no less true of Schopenhauer. True, in Schopenhauer the ideas borrowed from Bichat and Cabanis were mingled with other elements taken from Kant, Plato, and Buddhist metaphysics, whereas Maine de Biran contented himself with investigating certain problems propounded by the eighteenth century. Yet both these men alike oppose to the conscious personality of the ego the dim unconscious background which enfolds it,

sways it, and even directs it, and predetermines, unknown to ourselves, our thoughts and actions, our intelligence and character. Only afterwards do their doctrines diverge.

Affective life constitutes in us what Maine de Biran calls "animality." Above it, but linked to it, appears "humanity," i.e., consciousness reflecting on itself and master of itself, personality, or the ego. This latter begins to exist by itself only when exercising free activity or determined effort. Thus—and Maine de Biran likes to remind us that he is here taking up the thought of Leibniz—the idea that the human person has of itself is originally the idea of an active force. The ego is first of all activity and liberty. In other words, the ego is the soul, insomuch as it perceives its own existence, but this it perceives only when its activity meets (within the body) with a resistance which it endeavors to overcome.

If this observation is correct, the whole structure of Condillacism falls to pieces. Sensation is no longer the first fact of consciousness, the principle of all the soul's life. The very term "sensation" is abstract and ambiguous, because Condillac did not carry the analysis far enough. For, if sensation be conceived as simply passive, then it is only an "affective impression," and the ego does not yet appear: sensation may take place without consciousness being aware of it. Does sensation imply a motor reaction, conscious and deliberate? Then it resolves itself into a passive and an active ele-

ment. The latter is intentional effort. In it, and not in any received impression, must we seek the special origin of our active faculties, the pivotal point of existence and the foundation of all the simple ideas we may acquire concerning ourselves and our intellectual activity.

Yet Maine de Biran does not think that the soul appears to itself just as it really is. "I was at first rather inclined," he says, "to mistake the inmost feeling of our individuality, or what I called the ego, for the very core of the substance of the soul. But Kant has taught me better. We feel our own individuality; but the real substance of our soul we feel no more than any other substance." No doubt the ego that perceives and judges is the same that is perceived and judged; but this being which is perceived and judged has still an inmost core of substance inaccessible to apperception. It may be endowed, as Malebranche thought, with a multitude of properties or attributes which are unknown or do not come within the range of our inward sense. This inward sense may indeed assure us that *we* are thinking; and on this point Descartes's "I think, therefore I am," is irrefutable. But the most subtle analysis of this inward sense cannot possibly throw the slightest light upon our knowledge of ourselves, "as an object outside of thought." To believe that, by means of analysis based on purely internal experience, we can at length arrive at the notion of a substantial ego, is to mistake the psychological fact of what is within

us, that is, ourselves in the actual exercise of thought, for the metaphysical notion of the substance which is supposed to remain the same beyond and beneath thought.

Maine de Biran here agrees with Kant, as he says. In Kant, however, the theory of the ego's knowledge of itself has for its basis the whole of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and more especially the theory of sensible and intellectual knowledge. Maine de Biran, on the contrary, starts from the analysis of the first fact of consciousness, and on that analysis he afterwards attempts to found a theory of the understanding and reason. In opposition to the doctrine of categories, which is quite *à priori* in Kant, he endeavors to maintain a psychological genesis of the general principles of thought. Thus, because the ego perceives itself as a cause, Maine de Biran finds therein "the pattern and model of every idea of power, force, and cause." Unity, simplicity, existence, etc., are ideas which the ego obtains by means of an abstraction wrought upon itself, and which in a way isolates its own attributes. If we find these attributes again in objects, it is because they have been, so to speak, projected by the ego. In one word, reason is thus held to be the spontaneous result of a sort of self-analysis of consciousness.

But this is rather a sketch than a regular theory, and Maine de Biran was suspicious of everything that might carry him beyond the firm ground of experience. The science he seeks to establish

starts from a fact and must lead only to facts and to the laws which they obey. The absolute, as Maine de Biran does not hesitate to confess, is beyond its grasp. How, he says himself, could all things fail to be relative in our eyes, since the very existence of the ego, the individual personality which is the basis of the thinking being, is relative? The thing called ego being a compound, or the result of the union and relation between two substances, can conceive or feel nothing but as a compound or relation. The very idea of substance seems suspicious to Maine de Biran. The ego does not find it within itself, for it apprehends itself as a cause, not as a substance. This idea must, therefore, originate without our knowing it, in the representation of exterior things, space and matter. It was this idea that caused the philosophy of Descartes to tend in the direction of pantheism. It is the secret enemy of personality and liberty; it tends to mingle together in an obscure metaphysical unity the ego-person in which everything has its beginning, and the God-person in which all things end.

Though an original and deep psychologist, Maine de Biran was a timid metaphysician. No doubt the study of the ego induced him to think of it as a "hyperorganic" force, while the inward sense assured him of his liberty; but he was fully aware that there are problems, and most essential ones, to which his doctrine gives no direct answer, the moral problem, for instance. Therefore he

wished to complete his psychology by a reasoned adherence to a general system of philosophy in accordance with his inmost tendencies. In his second period he felt himself won over to Stoicism, which is, in his eyes, a moral philosophy based upon the dignity of the human personality and upon the energy of active effort. But Stoicism expects too much from man's will; and although Christianity, in its turn, makes man too weak and helpless, it was to Christianity that Maine de Biran turned in the latter years of his life for the "prop" of which he felt the need. He then wrote his *Nouveaux Essais d'Anthropologie,* which distinguish in man three lives, one above the other, as it were: sensitive life, which is in us that of the animal; human life, that is, the life of action and the struggle of the thinking principle against the instinctive and animal principle; and lastly, divine life, in which animalism is conquered and the struggle ceases because love has united man to the supreme source of all beings and all good. And thus, in a sort of quietism, ended this philosophy which had begun as a continuation of Condillac and Cabanis.

Maine de Biran is one of the three masters from whom Cousin acknowledges having received his philosophical education. The two others are Laromiguière, who, as early as 1810, taught him that Condillac's psychological analysis was incomplete and faulty and that attention cannot be a trans-

formed sensation, and Royer-Collard, who made him acquainted with Scotch philosophy. But the homage paid by Cousin to the philosophers whose teaching he had followed, or whose conversation he had heard, is not by any means equivalent to an exhaustive list of the sources from which he gathered his ideas. We shall come across others (which, indeed, he has himself pointed out), as we trace the general features of his doctrine.

"The leading thought of my life," wrote Cousin in 1826, "has been to rebuild eternal beliefs in accordance with the spirit of the age, and also to arrive at unity, but solely by the aid of the experimental method." Thus, the philosophical method employed by the eighteenth century was to him the right one. Cousin seeks no other. This method of observation and induction has given marvelous results in the natural sciences. Why has it hitherto led only to wretched ones in philosophy? Why, in England as well as in France, has it been able only to destroy, without laying any new foundation? The fault lies with the men, not with the method. The method is irreproachable, but the men have erred. They erred because they were systematic, and their systems distorted observation.

So Cousin, like all thinkers in his time, was chiefly concerned with "rebuilding." After such a formidable earthquake as the French Revolution had been, after the passionate and destroying criticism of the eighteenth century, there was no one

who did not feel the need either of raising again the ancient edifice or of becoming the architect of a new one. But, while the Traditionalists went resolutely counter to the doctrines of the eighteenth century, the method and principles of which they attacked, Cousin professed to follow its direction, but to correct its errors. "Since," he says, "we are, as regards the principle to be followed, in accord with the schools that we combat, we shall have only to point out the wrong, narrow or superficial applications that have been made of it."

Three schools in the eighteenth century began to apply a suitable method to philosophy: that of the "wise and judicious Locke," that of Reid, and that of Kant, the last being far superior to the two others. All three understood that philosophy must begin with a strict and thorough examination of the human mind and of its faculties. But this examination they made only partially, and each of them considered but one aspect of reality. The school of Locke and Condillac sought only the origin of our knowledge; the school of Reid studied only its actual features, without regard to its origin; lastly, the school of Kant was chiefly devoted to a consideration of the legitimacy of the passage from the subject to the object. A better application of the method would consist in studying at one and the same time all three problems, of which each school investigated but one. In order to make whole again the intellectual life

mutilated by each system we should withdraw ourselves into consciousness and then, without any spirit of system or exclusive prejudice, analyze thought in its elements, and *all its elements*, and seek the characteristics, and *all the characteristics*, with which it reveals itself to the vision of consciousness.

Such is the eclectic method under the first form given to it by Victor Cousin. It does not mean, as we see, the arbitrary juxtaposition of doctrines borrowed here and there without regard to any coördinating and governing principle, and without caring whether these doctrines are contradictory. Eclecticism borrows no piece of doctrine from previous systems. It bases itself solely upon the observation of facts, and upon induction. If it agrees on one or another point with a philosophical system that has preceded it, it is because there is in every doctrine, even in an erroneous one, as Spencer says, a "'soul of truth.'" Why, then, did Cousin choose the name of Eclecticism, which has caused so much misunderstanding? Because one of the most salient features of this system, which is founded upon complete observation, is that it comprises all the truth to be found in the preceding doctrines, which rested on incomplete observation: in this sense Eclecticism unites them in itself as in a common center.

The school of Condillac had found consciousness to be composed only of transformed sensations, and it reduced to sensation, as to a single principle, all

forms of the activity of the soul. But Cousin says an accurate and complete observation distinguishes in consciousness three kinds of irreducible facts: facts of sensation, of volition, and of intellection. The analysis of the first of these had been made, and correctly made, in the eighteenth century. That of the others had been distorted and misrepresented, and it was precisely the latter analysis which was to enable Cousin to "rebuild eternal truths." The experimental method was to build again what it had pulled down. It was to supply ontology with a sure instrument, and with broad and solid foundations.

Let us consider an intellectual fact, for instance the following judgment: "My volition moves my arm." In one sense this judgment is simply a fact of which consciousness informs me when it takes place. But in another sense this fact implies elements which are beyond the range of experience; for when I think "my volition is the cause of the motion of my arm," I express under a concrete form and apply to a particular case the following general principle: "Every phenomenon implies a cause." Now, as soon as I consider this principle, which is the soul of my judgment, it appears to me to be universal and necessary; that is, superior to experience, since the latter relates only to what is particular and contingent. Such is the transition from psychology to metaphysics; or, as Cousin says, from observation to speculation. The philosopher starts from facts, but these serve him

only as subject-matter or occasion. Psychology he uses simply as a "bridge" to lead him over to metaphysics or ontology, from which he was otherwise separated by an impassable chasm.

Metaphysics is the preëminent science, the science of sciences. There is no science of what is transitory, Cousin repeats after Plato. The object of science is the absolute; that is to say, that which remains forever self-identical, which is not subject to the necessity of coming into being or of changing. The eternal substance is "absolute," Plato's ideas are "absolute," and the principle of causality is "absolute." The task of science consists in seeking after the absolute, and in seeking it by means of observation, without which there is no real science. Now, it is just when we go to the bottom of the facts of consciousness which come within the range of observation, that we attain to principles that are absolute. The "psychological method" thus supplies the needed transition. It solves the initial problem of science, viz.: to find *à posteriori* something which is *à priori*. No doubt, strictly speaking, neither internal nor external experience can supply anything *à priori*. "From the fact to the principle there is no possible transition; there is an abyss between them." Still a fact may serve reason as a subject-matter or occasion in conceiving the principle.

What is then that "reason" which takes me into the world of the infinite and absolute, beyond the limits of experience? It is the principle of thought;

it is something within myself, but not myself; it is an *impersonal* faculty, although it cannot be exercised unless man's personality or ego be presupposed and added to it. "I shall perhaps never succeed in investigating its essence; but what I know very well is, that whenever it appears to me I have the intuition of what is immovable, necessary and absolute." May not these forms under which it is constantly manifested to me be its very modes of existence, and might I not then define it as the substance of necessary, universal and absolute truths, in the physical as well as in the moral order of things? Reason would then be the absolute and only substance, the source of every being and every truth; in one word—God. "Reason is God looking down upon man and revealing Himself to man under the form of absolute truth."

Cousin is here evidently anxious to go beyond Kant's point of view. He praises the latter philosopher for having restored the necessary principles of knowledge rejected by empiricism in the eighteenth century, and insufficiently justified by Reid. But Kant in his turn made a mistake, first in increasing the number of these principles, which may be reduced to two (the principle of causality and that of substance), and then chiefly in viewing these principles only as constituent forms of the human understanding. Kant thus leaves to reason but a relative value, and ends in a sort of scepticism. In order to escape this scepticism we must show that reason has an absolute value, that it is not

only man's reason, but Reason in itself, and that man merely participates in it. This is met, in Cousin, by the theory of "impersonal" reason revealed to man by necessary principles. This revelation he calls pure apperception, or the first and last fact of consciousness: it is what makes of us rational beings, and in virtue of it the most trifling of our judgments contains the absolute, and is an act of faith in God.

In whatever way we may conceive this "pure apperception," the absolute is in itself and not in us. "The absolute soars above humanity and nature, dominates and rules over them both eternally, with only this difference: the one knows it and the other does not." These brilliant expressions throw a light both upon Cousin's thought and upon its origin. We recognize in them Schelling's metaphysics. The latter's "intellectual intuition" nearly corresponds to Cousin's "pure apperception." It was natural that Cousin, desirous of going beyond Kant's point of view, should feel attracted towards Schelling's doctrine, which was born of the same need, and was then greatly in favor in Germany. Yet, though he is wonderfully in accord with the German philosopher in his theory of the absolute, he persists in differing from him in his method. Schelling proceeds *à priori;* Cousin maintains that his statements are founded on psychological observation. It is experience, he says, which, when applied to consciousness and carried to a certain degree of depth, yields what is

apparently most completely opposed to it, i.e., the revelation of the absolute.

Yet, one might object, are you sure that your method gives all that you attribute to it? If you really ground your statements on observation, you start from the fact, that is, from what is relative and conditioned, and however deep you may go, you can never do anything more than go from one condition to another, without ever reaching what is absolute or unconditioned. You have yourself said: "One cannot pass over from the fact to the principle; there is an abyss between them." How do you span this abyss? It is not sufficient to say that the fact is the occasion which leads to the conception of the principle; this is answering the question with the words of the question itself. The difficulty is a serious one. Cousin, though he does not answer it, at least narrows it down by the distinction,—all-important with him,—between the spontaneous and the reflective point of view.

No doubt, he says, from the reflective point of view, which is that of the understanding, we are driven from one cause to another, without being able to reach a supreme cause, and the phenomena that we apprehend in ourselves never represent the absolute substance. Had we no other way of looking at things, metaphysics would be an impossibility. But the reflective point of view cannot be the only one at our disposal, for whatever is reflected implies something primitive. For instance, our voluntary gestures we have already made spon-

taneously. It is the same with the sounds we emit in language; and how could we deliberate upon the reflective use we are to make of our liberty had not a spontaneous use of it first made us aware of its existence? In like manner, in the intellectual order, reflective judgment presupposes a spontaneous operation, which is precisely the pure apperception of reason. "It is our lot to seek for the spontaneous point of view by the help of reflection, that is, to destroy it by our very search." The light of the understanding, which proceeds from the distinctness and definiteness of our ideas, makes the deeper region of spontaneity, in which pure apperception apprehends the essential being without dividing or defining it, seem a little dark to us; so that the light of the understanding, which is a mere reflection, appears to us superior to the more real, but indistinct, light of pure apperception, without which, however, reflective judgment itself would be impossible. Pure apperception does not explicitly contain any idea of the limited or the unlimited, of the relative or the absolute, of the finite or the infinite; it contains all these things implicitly, and reflection forthwith converts them into distinct and necessary truths.

This theory is not only interesting on account of its obvious connection with those of Plato and Plotinus, as well as with those of Schelling and Hegel; it is also one of the most significant tokens of the growing philosophical reaction against the spirit of the eighteenth century: a token all the more deci-

sive as Cousin himself does not seem to have understood all its significance. He flattered himself that he had been a faithful follower of the experimental method and had practiced it better than the century that had itself so loved and extolled it. Now the principle of that method consisted in carrying analysis as far as possible, in resolving into its parts even what seemed at first indivisible, in seeking out the genesis of all that is in the soul, and in considering nature itself as an earlier custom: in one word, in supposing even that to be acquired which represents itself as spontaneous. Does Cousin remain faithful to the method when, on the contrary, he explains the reflective by the spontaneous and exalts a sort of rational instinct above analysis? Does he not rather agree with the adversaries of that method, such as De Maistre, who reproached the philosophers of the eighteenth century with destroying all life and poetry, and tried to explain by some mysterious, unfathomable, divine spontaneity, the development of human thought, of societies, languages, and civilizations?

Romanticism in Germany had violently risen against the French spirit of the eighteenth century. Over against the cold and chilling light of analysis it set the fruitful *chiaro-oscuro* of natural spontaneity; against the observation of æsthetic rules, the untrammelled liberty of creative genius; against the conscious processes of reflection, the imperceptible movement of living nature. This romantic phil-

osophy found its way into the teaching of Fichte and Schelling, with which Cousin became acquainted in his youth, while with one of its chief representatives, A. W. Schlegel, he had in Paris opportunities for intercourse. In his lectures from 1818 to 1828, Cousin was full of this philosophy. He was then really a romantic philosopher, and this chiefly accounts for the enthusiasm with which the youth of the time received his lessons. Perhaps they did not understand very thoroughly such abstruse metaphysics, but a genuine feeling apprised them that Cousin's brilliant yet obscure precepts sprang from the same soil as the poetry of Hugo, Lamartine, and De Vigny, or the pictures of Scheffer and Delacroix.

The eighteenth century had hoped for the greatest results from the personal action of the legislator, the sage, and the philosopher; romantic philosophy, on the contrary, in this as in everything else reduced the rôle ascribed to conscious reflection, and looked for the progress of mankind only from a spontaneous evolution within the souls of men. From this again Cousin drew his inspiration. Philosophers, in his thought, are but the interpreters of humanity, and their teaching is to the dim feeling of the mass of mankind what reflection is to spontaneity. It creates nothing; its function is merely to make things clear by dividing and subdividing them, and to express them by means of analysis. Mankind as a whole is "inspired."

The beliefs of the masses are *true;* what they lack is only the knowledge of the secret meaning of their beliefs.

We shall not, therefore, be very much surprised to detect here a point of contact between Eclecticism and Traditionalism, and to find that Cousin agrees with Lamennais as to the idea of "inspired mankind." But Lamennais, like De Maistre and De Bonald, openly attacks the eighteenth century in its principle and in its method, whereas Cousin claims to combat it in the very name of its principle and method. He does not perceive that, by setting spontaneity above reflection, he has adopted an entirely contrary principle and method. His Eclecticism breaks here upon the irreducible contradiction between the elements he tries to bring together. Between the method of the eighteenth century and the metaphysics of Romanticism a choice had to be made.

God is the one infinite and absolute substance. Indeed, says Cousin, if He be not all things He is nothing. For this pantheistic maxim he was afterwards severely reproached, when he had become the responsible director of philosophical teaching in France. As much as he could he attenuated the force of its meaning, and at last substituted for it the following: "If God be not *in* all things, He is nothing"—a bootless concession, which did not disarm his Catholic adversaries. It was not only this maxim, but the very spirit of his philosophy that seemed to

them suspicious, and also his way of understanding the relation between reason and faith. Had he not dared to say, in his course of lectures in 1828, that man advances from the twilight of religious faith to the full light of philosophical truth? Is religion, then, a sort of metaphysics for the people, and are dogmas only more or less accurate symbols of that truth which finds its full expression in rational doctrines? Hegel had indeed said something similar, but under a veiled form, and less likely to cause a scandal because in a Protestant country. Cousin was violently attacked. He stubbornly withstood the storm, and when he had to give way he preferred to give up this or that point of his doctrine rather than to endanger the very existence of philosophical teaching. After 1830 Victor Cousin must be judged as a politician, and no longer as a philosopher.

Furthermore, of this absolute substance we can say nothing, except that it exists. Reason, or "the Word" serves as mediator between it and us, and it is manifested by the three great ideas of the Beautiful, the Good and the True. Herein is the threefold principle of science, art and morals. These superior ends of human activity are thus connected with a divine source, and at the same time the sensualistic and materialistic explanations given of them in the eighteenth century are refuted. Art seeks to realize in plastic beauty a suprasensible ideal. Science pursues beyond the knowledge of what is relative the possession of its true object, which is the Abso-

lute. Lastly action, freeing itself from selfish motives, none of which can fully satisfy a reasonable being, yields to moral obligation, and conscience recognizes in duty the bidding of God Himself.

Cousin has read the *Critique of Practical Reason*, and makes a frequent use of Kant's "sublime" doctrine. Yet he does not feel constrained to follow its principle rigorously. He does not acknowledge that man owes to "the categorical imperative" absolute and almost passive obedience. There are cases, he says (no doubt influenced by Jacobi), when the decision of the soul, being neither blind nor deliberate, but spontaneous, is self-inspired, and attains to heroism and self-sacrifice from its own first impulse. In the domain of action as well as in that of knowledge, the creative and original function belongs not to reflection but to free spontaneity.

As to the soul, it is undoubtedly the first object of philosophy, since our observation is first concerned with the facts of consciousness, which alone are directly given to us. But the essence of the soul is not directly known to us. Cousin thinks with the Scotch school, that "the real and substantial ego does not come under the eye of consciousness." If we get some knowledge of it, it is by applying the principle of substance; an application not reflective and logical, but primitive and spontaneous. This is our first step outside of consciousness. The ego then appears to us as thought, sensibility and activity at one and the same time.

If we seek what constitutes its inmost nature, we find it is neither thought nor sensibility. The ego in its essence is liberty, and it is just because it is free that it is capable of knowing and feeling. "The privilege and grandeur of liberty! Where that is wanting, intelligence is stifled, and where intelligence dies, sensibility perishes. . . . The ego is free: that is its inmost essence."

Cousin was not embarrassed by the objections raised against man's free-will. This free-will is sufficiently proved in his eyes by the testimony of conscience which charges us with the responsibility for our own actions, and by the absurdity of consequences that follow from the contrary supposition. But he conceives liberty under two forms: one reflective, the other spontaneous. Liberty is exercised with reflection when the ego sets before itself an act to be accomplished, deliberates, and finally comes to a decision. This form of liberty implies another, which is accompanied neither by deliberation nor by choice; a purer form although far less clear to the understanding, and one in which the very essence of the soul's activity is manifested. Here again, as in his theory of knowledge and as in his theory of morals, Cousin does not hesitate to subordinate reflection to spontaneity. Liberty, like reason, participates in the absolute; and this participation, though it remains a mystery to the understanding, is yet in us the source of every light and every virtue.

The course of lectures delivered by Cousin in 1828 marks the culminating point, and, as M. Janet says, the end of the development of his theoretical philosophy. In the lectures of 1817 and 1818 the influence of Schelling had been predominant, while in 1828 that of Hegel had become most important. During his long stay in Germany, Cousin had had time to become familiar with Hegel's philosophy, which had finally eclipsed all others. He had even been able to profit by the explanations of Hegel himself and of his closest followers. Hegel said on reading Cousin's lectures: "I furnished him the fish, and he has served it with his sauce." The influence of Hegel is chiefly felt in the second part of the course of lectures, which treats of the philosophy of history. Indeed, Cousin never concealed what he owed to the German philosophers of his time. He claims for himself nothing but the conception of an impartial Eclecticism, which, judging previous doctrines to be not false but incomplete, endeavors to build a true and complete one which shall unite them all in a vast synthesis.

To consider in Cousin only the metaphysician of the years before 1830 would be wrongly to deprive him of a considerable part of his work. Cousin was also an orator, a professor, an administrator, a historian of philosophy, and in each of these rôles he was admirable, or at least interesting. As a professor and orator in 1828 his success was equal to that of Villemain and Guizot, and the fame of his eloquence still remains. As an administrator

he was the object of sharp criticism. In the course of defending the teaching of philosophy in French secondary schools against the clergy who wished to suppress it, he formally required of the body of professors he thus protected a politic prudence that was rather incompatible with philosophical liberty. The very obedience he exacted from them changed as soon as he was dead into lasting spite against his memory. Even his philosophical sincerity had appeared open to suspicion, when, in the successive editions of his works, he had been observed to weaken his own thought, to strip it of everything original, to pare it down to a vaguely platonized and declamatory kind of spiritualism, and, in short, to do his utmost to make it insignificant. Thus, if we were to distinguish two philosophical periods in Cousin's life (which is unnecessary), the main object of the second would seem to have been to disclaim the first.

At least his services to the history of philosophy can not be questioned; these were rendered chiefly in his translations of Plato and Proclus, and by his edition of the complete works of Descartes, a task so well done that we are only just beginning to think of needing a new edition. At the same time, Cousin let in a first light in the long and obscure period of the Middle Ages; he had also the good fortune to come across an unpublished pamphlet of Pascal, and he discovered the original text of the *Pensées*. These historical works, bearing on such various epochs, are all, nevertheless, connected with

the leading idea of his philosophy; for impartial Eclecticism bears not only on the facts of consciousness, but also on the various doctrines which are met with in the history of philosophy. To throw light upon the history of philosophy by means of a system, and to prove this very system by the whole history of philosophy: such was the program Cousin had set for himself in his youth.

Why did he fail to fulfil it, in spite of his luminous intelligence, his happy genius, and his quick power of assimilation? The causes of the failure are many, and we have seen in the course of this study a most important one: the incompatibility between the method Cousin meant to follow and the doctrines he taught. Then again, he never worked out by himself any part of his philosophy, at least in his earlier and better period. We have nothing but sketches; the author has drawn them with swift, bold strokes, but has not grappled with the difficulties that arise in the details of execution and compel one to make his thought perfectly clear. These sketches themselves, with the exception of some prefaces and short essays, are lectures delivered before students. As they were brilliant, ingenious, spangled with eloquent passages and striking expressions, one easily understands how they bred enthusiasm in a youthful audience and gave the impression of a forcible doctrine. But the reader who is no longer under the spell of the spoken word is necessarily more difficult to please. And the philosophy of Cousin, even when it

seems most abstruse and metaphysical, preserves the qualities, but also the defects, of oratory. He claims to be building up a science, but in fact pleads rather than demonstrates. Like a barrister, in the absence of rigorous proofs he is content with probability. He has the dogmatic tone which inspires and even commands confidence in the hearer; but evading objections is not the same as answering them. All this explains why Eclecticism, after its brilliant beginning in 1818–1828, could have no fruitful development. Cousin himself did not care for that: it was sufficient for him that Eclecticism should make shift to live on.

Among Cousin's disciples, some clung unreservedly to the spiritualism of his later period; others, far less numerous, abandoned it in important points, though remaining faithful to the general spirit of his doctrine. Such were Jouffroy, about 1840, and later on, Vacherot. Jouffroy had been one of Cousin's first pupils. Having a soul eager for truth and thirsting for certitude, he was obliged to confess that the philosophy of his admired master did not give him entire satisfaction. None better than he expressed the doubts and hesitations to which his generation was subject (compare Alfred de Musset's *Confession d' un Enfant du Siècle*) and the imperfect solutions with which it finally had to be contented. In order to fill the place of the religious faith which he had lost, he had dreamed of an earnest and self-reliant philosophical faith;

and when he saw the impossibility of such an attainment his disappointment vented itself in eloquent and passionate expressions of regret, for which he still lives in the world's memory. Though he had translated Reid and Dugald Stewart, he refused to admit with them that the ego remains unknowable, and that consciousness can grasp only the phenomena of ourselves. But he has neither the originality nor the subtle psychological analysis of Maine de Biran, and his other works on morals or æsthetics are chiefly an index of a tender, proud, and aristocratic soul, rather than of a vigorous philosophical mind.

Vacherot calls himself a free disciple of Cousin. Free he is, indeed, since instead of putting aside, as Cousin himself did, the metaphysical problems which Cousin had proposed in his earlier period, it was with the study of these problems that he chiefly dealt. He investigated the ideas of perfection, of the infinite, of the ideal and of the real, to which Cousin had not given sufficiently precise definitions, and in *La Métaphysique et la Science* he endeavored to show that perfection is incompatible with real existence. We know the real, we form conceptions of the ideal. Renan was therefore right in saying that "God is the category of the ideal."

This doctrine, in which the influence of Hegel is visible, was strongly combated by those who might be called orthodox eclectic philosophers, especially by Caro and Janet. Even before these, Ad. Garnier, Jules Simon, Saisset, Bersot, and many

distinguished professors had followed the evolution of their master towards what was called spiritualism. They found in it a vantage-ground whereon to defend themselves on one side against the Catholic party, and on the other against the materialists and positivists; and they meant to uphold, together with their philosophy, those liberal principles from which they did not separate it, and which were dearer to them than almost everything else. They represented, not ingloriously, the *juste milieu* interpretation of the principles of the French Revolution. While defending the spirit of the eighteenth century against the traditionalistic and clerical reactions, at the same time they combated what they called the excess of that spirit. Their philosophical system, as well as their political doctrine, which it reflects, was essentially a compromise.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SOCIAL REFORMERS—AUGUSTE COMTE.

THE first half of the nineteenth century witnessed the appearance in France of a great many thinkers whose efforts were chiefly directed towards political philosophy and the reform of society. In this they showed themselves the immediate heirs of the philosophers of the eighteenth century. But this devotion to social questions is also obviously a reaction from the French Revolution. Such an extraordinary upheaval could not but make itself felt in the world of thought, and inevitably gave a common impulse to the minds it had stirred. Some thought of combating the Revolution, others of correcting it, others of completing it; all of them, intentionally or not, and even in their apparently most independent speculations, took some account of the prodigious historical event which they had witnessed. We are often surprised to see some of them present as feasible the most impracticable social metamorphoses; but we must remember that that generation had seen the wreck of the old French monarchy, the almost yearly alterations in the maps of Europe, and the rise and fall of Napoleon. Thus the limit of the possible in social and

political matters must have encroached considerably upon the impossible in their eyes.

Among these theorists the earliest, and no doubt also the most original, is Saint-Simon. Born in 1760 and dying in 1825, he belongs to both centuries, and exactly represents the transition from one to the other. His mind was formed in the school of D'Alembert and the "philosophers;" and he in his turn formed, or contributed to form, the opinions of Auguste Comte, Augustin Thierry, Bazard, Enfantin, and the majority of French socialists. Although there is no one more unlike Bayle than Saint-Simon, he may be said to stand on the threshold of the nineteenth century, as Bayle did on the threshold of the eighteenth. His was a stirring, or rather, an ever-bubbling mind, surprisingly fertile and no less surprisingly powerless to regulate itself. Impelled by a sort of restlessness to pass constantly from one subject to another, he went back and forth between scientific and philosophical, social and religious problems; he was constantly retracing his steps, strewing his capricious way with new and sometimes profound notions, with just observation and even with suggestive principles, from which more practical minds who came after him were able to draw true inferences. Nothing more fragmentary and desultory can be imagined than the pamphlets in which he attempts to elucidate his doctrine, which, however, aims at being synthetical and as viewing things "as a whole."

"I had set myself the task," says Saint-Simon,

"of throwing light upon the question of social organization." In fact, just as the disruption of the old system of government had been the work of the philosophers of the eighteenth century, the "social reorganization" was to be the task of those of the nineteenth. The authors of the *Encylopædia* did a work that needed to be done. They destroyed a system of ideas and institutions which had served their time, and were henceforth only an impediment to advancing civilization. But to destroy is not sufficient: it is not the final destiny of society to inhabit ruins. A critical period must be succeeded by an organic period. The philosophers of the eighteenth century wrote an encyclopædia in order to overthrow the theological and feudal system. It was essential that the philosophers of the nineteenth should, in their turn, write another encyclopædia in order to construct the industrial and scientific system. "My purpose," says Saint-Simon, "is to impress upon the nineteenth century an organizing character."

According to De Maistre, one need not go very far to find the principles of social organization. They have been revealed by God Himself, and are taught by the Church. The crime of the eighteenth century consisted precisely in ignoring these principles, and in having fiercely attacked the Church. According to Saint-Simon, on the contrary, the eighteenth century was right in entirely overthrowing principles bred by superstition, ignorance and barbarism. Like most men of the second half of the

eighteenth century, he was by nature an unbeliever. He maintained for a long time without the slightest feeling of embarrassment that "deism" should be left to the people, while philosophers must rise to "physicism." Toward the close of his life, however, he began to think of founding a religion of his own; but still religion presented itself to him as "a political institution tending towards the general organization of mankind," or, more precisely, "the body of applications of general science by means of which enlightened men govern the ignorant."

Saint-Simon has indeed a faith, but his faith is the same that inspired Condorcet: it is faith in progress. The Golden Age, which a blind tradition has hitherto placed in the past, lies before us. We must forsake the false and disheartening notion that good has preceded evil; we must establish the comforting and inspiriting notion that our labors will increase the welfare of our children. This is an "essentially religious" idea. This progress depends chiefly upon the advancement of science, about which Saint-Simon gave perhaps some of his most original and helpful views. He indeed pointed out before Auguste Comte the onward process of the sciences and of philosophy towards a positive form, and showed that progress is dependent on the disappearance of metaphysical hypotheses. He distinctly foresaw what scientific psychology and social science would be; but hastened to cast aside purely scientific questions (in which, moreover, he sometimes blundered) and to come to what he

thought the all-important problem of "social reorganization." All nations tend to one goal, viz.: to pass on from the governmental, feudal, military system to the adminstrative, industrial, pacific system. The moment for such a change has come, and Saint-Simon believes himself destined to play the part assigned by the eighteenth century to the "legislators."

First of all, there must be in society thus "reorganized" a temporal power and a spiritual power, distinct from each other. This division existed even in the Middle Ages; it kept all European nations united for several centuries under the hegemony of the popes, and is "so perfect, that nothing better can be conceived." Now the temporal power is to pass from the hands of the noblemen and military men into those of manufacturers and producers, and the spiritual power is to belong to men of science and to artists; for the new system must be based on principles derived from the nature of things, and independent of passing beliefs and transient opinions. The clergy must be the most learned body, or else the most learned body will seize possession of priestly offices.

The supreme principle of morals is henceforth to be this: "All men must work." Hence the condemnation of idleness, and Saint-Simon's vigorous attacks against the "drones" that live at the expense of producers, attacks in which the antagonism between labor and capital, between the richer

classes and the proletariat, was already beginning to be felt.

Lastly, towards the end of his life, Saint-Simon promulgated the idea of a new Christianity. The work of the first apostles had for many years past been misjudged and ignored; Roman Catholics as well as Protestants were now both heretics. "Definitive" Christianity must take up again the interrupted tradition of primitive Christianity; that is to say, it must devote itself solely to a social reorganization intended for the physical and moral improvement of the poorer classes.

It is not our purpose here to study the Saint-Simonian school, notwithstanding the interest excited by its economical and social doctrines. We are likewise obliged to pass by such interesting thinkers as Pierre Leroux and Proudhon, whose works belong rather to the history of social theories than to that of philosophy. Still we cannot help mentioning at least another Utopian reformer perhaps as original as St. Simon: Charles Fourier. As early as 1808 he had published his *Théorie des Quatre Mouvements*. The censure he passes therein upon "civilization," and upon the philosophers who are the theorists and apologists of it, is unmercifully clear-sighted. Drawing his inspiration evidently from Rousseau, but being far more precise in his descriptions, he throws a strong light upon the incoherency, the hypocrisy, the waste of strength and wealth, the misery and oppression in the midst of which our modern society is living, and yet not

without a secret feeling of complacency that induces it to deem itself superior in culture and refinement to all the preceding ages. Fourier then boldly proceeds to state the economical and social causes of the disease to which civilized nations are a prey, and in so doing proves the optimism adopted by many philosophers of the eighteenth century wholly untenable.

But Fourier himself, when he abandons the rôle of critic and expounds his own doctrine, paralyzes us by the candor of his optimism. He does not doubt that happiness may be secured for all in the society he dreams of, when mèn shall live "harmoniously" together, instead of living in a "civilized" state; when their passions (which must needs be good, since they are given by God), whose repression makes them noxious, shall no longer be repressed, but shall find in a properly organized society their free, natural and innocent exercise.

Such dreams now appear to us almost childish; yet mighty minds in their youth have been carried away by them. How many men of great ability have at first been Saint-Simonians or Fourierists! Filled with enthusiasm for doctrines which promised less social inequality, more justice, more welfare and enlightenment for all, they were enraptured by a generous feeling of human solidarity. Such were in their youth many distinguished scientific men, engineers, manufacturers, and at least two philosophers, Auguste Comte and M. Renouvier.

With Auguste Comte something reappears which had not been seen in France for a long time: an original system of philosophy, borrowing its principles neither from the English nor from the Germans, and endeavoring to give a final solution to the problems of theory and practice. So that, while the doctrines of Saint-Simon and Fourier engendered scarcely anything but sects, or private churches, which, after a short period of fame and popularity, vegetated on without exercising any visible effect upon the world around, the philosophy of Comte had a quite different fate. Independently of the Positivist church, which still has followers in France, in England, and in both Americas, the spirit of the doctrine spread all over the world, and its influence has been so considerable that the advent of this doctrine may be reckoned among the most important events of this century.

This very fact is enough to show the absurdity of the question often raised as to the originality of Auguste Comte; a borrowed thought could never have had such universal and deep influence. He has been reproached with having done hardly anything beyond reducing to a system the ideas he received from the philosophers of the eighteenth century, and particularly from Dr. Burdin and from Saint-Simon. But he never denied his indebtedness to his predecessors, except perhaps as regards Saint-Simon, after their rupture. He calls Condorcet "his spiritual father," and openly considers himself

as the successor—and rectifier—of the eighteenth century. From Dr. Burdin we have only indications, interesting indeed, but merely sketched, of the positive classification of the sciences. And finally, even granting that many ideas were suggested to Comte by Saint-Simon, it is sufficient to read both of them in order to see how much was left for the disciple to do, and how far he surpassed his master. Saint-Simon advances by disconnected spurts, and inconsistency does not embarrass him. He seems always completely engrossed by the thought of the moment; if that does not agree with his previous utterances, so much the worse for them; he cares but very little. Comte's philosophy, on the contrary, is admirably consistent throughout. Being so rich in particular ideas as to have been used as a storehouse by many writers who borrowed from it the essential part of their doctrines, it is so carefully arranged that we are always able to see how those particular ideas are connected with the general principles. In one word, Auguste Comte thinks as a philosopher, and his system is among the best-constructed ones that have ever been put forth. It matters little, then, whether most of the ideas he linked together into this powerful system had been expressed before, scattered here and there; it is he who, by joining them into one system, gave them most of their virtue and value.

According to A. Comte, the modern world is in a state of crisis. The eighteenth century had just achieved a work of dissolution and destruction

which had been begun as early as the end of the Middle Ages. It finally destroyed the principles and beliefs on which the social system of Europe was based. But can this state last? No, for human societies have spiritual as well as material conditions of existence. In order that they may live there must be concord among minds, opinions must be fixed and generally accepted, and beliefs become common to all. This truth has been made amply apparent by retrograde statesmen such as De Maistre, Lamennais, etc., although their application of it was essentially false. They wished men to come back to the Roman Catholic faith. Comte thinks their attempt a hopeless one, and that men must look to science and philosophy for salvation and the means of reuniting minds. "The object of all my labors," he wrote in 1825, "has been to re-establish in society something spiritual that is capable of counter-balancing the influence of the ignoble materialism in which we are at present submerged." The lofty ambition of the Positive philosophy is to give to mankind those indispensable moral bonds which religion has ceased to supply.

We have already met with thoughts and projects of the same kind in Saint-Simon and in all those who at that time felt that a "destructive and critical" period must be succeeded by a "constructive and organizing" one. But what is original with Comte is his conception of the reconstructive work. Others go straight to their mark. So eager are they to procure for suffering

mankind the remedy it needs, that each of them brings a panacea. The Traditionalists preach submissiveness to the Church; Saint-Simon proposes Christian socialism and a clergy of scientists; Fourier wishes to set up "phalansteries." All these attempts, says Comte, are doomed to certain failure. They are the very symptoms of the evil we have to combat, for they presume to cure the ills of the social body without knowing its structure and functions, just as in former times men undertook to affect nature without knowing physics, and to practice medicine without knowing physiology. The first task, upon which all the rest depends, is not, therefore, to found a religion or to transform the economic system of Europe. We must first of all construct a true social science, and a science of "positive politics." "I am, and will be, simply a theorist," Comte writes; "I shall look upon all discussions bearing upon constitutions as nonsense pure and simple, until the spiritual reorganization of society is effected, or at least well under way."

The mental and moral anarchy in which Europe now is, shows itself in ever-recurring revolutionary outbursts, in as surely recurring reactions, and in the see-saw movements of parties equally eager for strife and powerless to establish anything permanent. But how can we re-establish strong common convictions and concord among minds while harmony is wanting in each individual mind, while social disorder remains a token and conse-

quence of the troubled state in which everybody's feelings and ideas are involved? On the other hand, if we suppose "mental harmony" to be once established in an individual, it will before long be imparted to others, since the same demonstrations must have the same value in their eyes as in his. The problem of "spiritual reorganization" can therefore be set forth in the following terms: "To find a theory which will establish a conception of nature, of man, and of society, logically harmonious and sufficiently evident to convince all minds." We are here very far from Utopia and the dream of social perfection, for this problem of Comte is one pre-eminently philosophical.

Now the want of harmony under which men's minds labor is due essentially to the simultaneous presence within them of three different and even opposite modes of thought which are at strife, and no one of which can as yet completely subdue the other two. Of certain objects we judge in a scientific and positive way; for instance, we reduce the motion of celestial bodies in the solar system to problems of mechanics. We are thus able to foretell astronomical phenomena with some accuracy, and knowing the laws which prevail in these phenomena we no longer think of seeking their cause or end. On other points we think as metaphysicians; for instance, psychological phenomena, such as thought, consciousness and memory, we think cannot be explained without supposing an extra-phenomenal reality, a self-

existing principle, which we call the soul. And lastly, when we consider the whole of the universe, or the succession of great historical events, we think we recognize in these the action of a supreme, intelligent and all-powerful cause, tending to an end which in fact escapes us, and we think as theologians.

The theological mode of thought predominates chiefly in the child. For when contact with the outer world first rouses reflection in man, he begins by supposing everywhere, behind all phenomena, beings similar to himself, who act with a purpose. By degrees, as he notices the perfectly regular recurrence of certain phenomena, he ceases to postulate an act of volition in order to explain each as it occurs; he next imagines substances, forms, immovable and eternal "ideas," wherewith to account for all that is individual and transient. Lastly, in his mature years, he imagines less; he observes and reasons more; he abstains from seeking after causes and substances, and pursues henceforth only the knowledge of laws.

But this transition from one mode of thought to another is never methodical or complete; some traces of the first are found in the second, and some of the first two in the third. And above all, should we consider the evolution of the individual mind alone, we should never have discovered this law; here the evolution is too brief, too rapid, while it is veiled and even disfigured by the powerful influence of education, which takes each new generation from

the outset to the point reached by the collective generations of the past! But consider the evolution of the whole of mankind and this great law at once appears: human thought passes from the theological stage to the metaphysical, and from the metaphysical to the positive. The metaphysical stage is in fact an unstable condition, a transition between the theological stage which is going to pieces and the positive stage which is being prepared.

There are, then, really but two mental attitudes wherein the human mind finds itself upon a firm and durable basis, and in which it can reduce its conception of the universe to a system. The first consists in seeking out the cause, essence and end of all existing things, in trying to *explain* phenomena and their laws, in pursuing, in a word, the knowledge of the absolute. The second consists in being contented with the knowledge of the relative, which alone is within our reach, and with the determination of the laws which enable us to predict phenomena. The former constantly hopes that natural phenomena may suddenly be transformed in favor of man, since to bring about such a result it would be sufficient to conciliate the divine will upon which phenomena depend. The latter knows, according to Bacon's expression, that man's power over nature is measured by his knowledge, and that natural phenomena can never be altered except in accordance with their laws.

The history of the sciences shows by a great many examples that in spite of desperate resistance

and often lamentable strifes the first attitude is gradually replaced by the second. Man first adopted the simplest anthropomorphic and theological explanation of the celestial phenomena which attracted his attention. He conceived the earth to be the center of the universe, and man himself the final goal of creation; he imagined the stars to be gods, and their regular motion to be the expression of divine wisdom. By degrees, he became aware that he was an inhabitant of a remote district in the universe, and that the orbits of the planets were predetermined by necessary laws. And yet it is scarcely more than a century since men of science ceased to require some intervention of divine will in celestial dynamics. Even in our days there are to be found in physics unmistakable traces of the metaphysical spirit, and to a still greater degree in physiology and the moral sciences. But still, as time moves forward, science evidently tends to assume a more and more positive form, to free itself more and more from unverifiable hypotheses, and to restrict itself systematically to the knowledge of the laws which govern phenomena. Will not the harmony among minds which we seek be realized on the day when the victory of the positive spirit is complete, and is not this victory the necessary outcome of a self-accomplished evolution?

Without doubt the march of progress is of this nature; yet the solution of the problem is not so simple. There are positions from which the positive spirit, as manifested hitherto in science, is powerless

to drive out the metaphysical and theological spirit. Theology and metaphysics have not only afforded to man in past times a temporary explanation of certain natural phenomena, but they have also supplied and are still supplying him with a general view of the universe, a conception of mankind, of its destiny, of the use it must make of its forces, in short, with a rule of conduct and a discipline. There lies the secret of the tenacity with which men cling to their religious and metaphysical beliefs. They find here an answer to what are to them vital questions; and they will never forsake these points of view, unless a better answer to those questions comes to them from elsewhere. Now the positive spirit has hitherto offered them none. It tends to correct and transform each science considered separately, but it does not offer a single principle to regulate the mutual relations of the sciences, nor, it may be said with still greater force, does it offer one to regulate the relations between science in general and the other forms of human activity. In a word, the positive spirit has represented hitherto the partial and special point of view, whereas philosophic systems and religions represent the synthetical and general point of view. Now the latter point of view is no less indispensable to man than the former; so indispensable, indeed, that we cannot think that man will ever abandon it so long as his reflection is directed either upon himself or upon the universe.

If therefore the present crisis is due to the co-

existence in men's souls of the positive spirit and the metaphysical and theological spirit, which according to A. Comte are mutually exclusive, and yet if the demands of the metaphysical spirit are as well-founded in the general point of view as those of the positive spirit are in the special scientific point of view, what will be the issue of this conflict? De Maistre, who is perfectly consistent, wishes man to renounce utterly the positive spirit, and to return to the mental and moral unity of the Middle Ages. A logical but manifestly absurd solution. Human intelligence never takes the backward track; it has achieved too many imperishable acquisitions. But if the theological and metaphysical spirit can under no circumstances afford the desired solution, cannot the positive spirit do so under certain conditions? What is wanting in it that it cannot constitute the "mental harmony" that we seek, give a scientific answer to moral and social questions, and prescribe rules for human life and for science itself? Let us now suppose the positive method to be applied not only to certain classes of phenomena but to all phenomena in the universe, including social and moral phenomena; let us suppose that the positive point of view ceases thus to be partial and special and becomes universal and general; that the sciences, in short, instead of progressing separately are united and disciplined by a positive philosophy: shall we not thus obtain real mental harmony by means of unity in method and homogeneity in thought?

Then the domination of the positive spirit will be fully and entirely established, since it will have actually "replaced" all that the theological and metaphysical spirit formerly afforded to mankind.

All is then reduced to the supreme question: Whether the positive spirit can, from the special province it now rules, rise to the government of the universal realm; and whether there can be, not only positive natural sciences but positive morals, politics and religion? "Yes," answers Auguste Comte, "all this is possible, if a positive social science be possible." Comte therefore endeavors chiefly to constitute this social science. There lies the clue to the system, there lies the solution of that threefold problem, scientific, moral and religious which he proposed to himself. "The creation of sociology," he says, "now comes to constitute the fundamental unity in the whole system of modern philosophy."

Why did it not come sooner? To this question sociology itself gives the answer. It shows that the progress of mankind takes place according to necessary laws, and that any social phenomenon, the founding of a new science for instance, is possible only when all the indispensable conditions are in conjunction. Thus, in order that moral and social phenomena might become the object of a positive science and be studied by the same method as the other natural phenomena, that is, by observation and the inductive method, it required

nothing less than the moral, intellectual and religious state of Europe, and particularly of France, in the beginning of the nineteenth century. It was necessary that the system of ideas and beliefs on which the Middle Ages had thriven should have slowly dissolved, that criticism should have gradually undermined its principles, that, screened by metaphysics, and with the help of the advancement of science, the rudiments of a new system should have been prepared; lastly, it was necessary that the great shock of the French Revolution should have made evident to all eyes the impossibility either of holding to the old principles or of founding anything new on the purely critical ideas of "philosophers." At this stage of events, and only then, could sociology become a science. And if, instead of considering the whole evolution of European society, we examine only the evolution of the sciences, the same law will appear evident to us. In any science discoveries can take place only according to a certain order; Kepler comes after Copernicus, and Newton after Kepler. In the series of the sciences, each can become positive only after the preceding ones have attained a certain degree of development and positiveness.

This idea of the hierarchy of the sciences, under the name of classification of sciences, plays a leading part in the Positive philosophy. It is one of the points in the system which are more generally known and at the same time one of the most imperfectly known. In this classification Comte

deals only with theoretical sciences, and among these with abstract sciences only. He classifies them in accordance with their decreasing generality and the increasing complexity of the phenomena studied in them; and so he reckons six fundamental sciences, mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology, sociology. This simple and clear classification, which upon the whole corresponds fairly to the order in which these sciences have developed, has been commonly adopted by scientific men, who have found it convenient. But it has been somewhat sharply criticized by philosophers, by Mr. Herbert Spencer, for instance, who endeavored to show that it did not answer the conditions of an exact and complete classification. No doubt Comte would have replied that he had not pretended to give such a classification. It is a problem which he did not wish to treat completely. The proof of this is that when distinguishing between abstract and concrete sciences he made no attempt to classify the latter. His classification of the sciences expresses chiefly their order of dependency from a positive point of view. Each of them presupposes the preceding ones and is not presumed by them. Thus geometry has no need of astronomy; but astronomy, on the contrary, could not begin to become a science until after the achievements of Greek geometricians. Physics presupposes mechanics and astronomy; chemistry in its turn presumes physics. Phenomena pertaining to living bodies are subjected to the laws of

mechanics, physics, chemistry, and besides to special biological laws. Along with each new order of phenomena depending on simpler and more general phenomena there appears a new science which supposes the preceding sciences to have been first constituted.

Social phenomena being the most complex of all, sociology is accordingly the positive science which we must expect to be the last organized. The political illusions still dominant in our days, not only among the lower classes but among well-informed persons and even among statesmen, show sufficiently that men are as yet scarcely accustomed to consider social facts from a positive point of view. Can we wonder at this when positive biology itself is quite recent, dating only from the end of the eighteenth century? And yet, until the latter science had attained a certain degree of development no positive sociology was possible.

This is why all constructive attempts at sociology made by Comte's predecessors were necessarily imperfect, and are merely monuments to the genius of their authors. Thus Montesquieu clearly saw in advance of his time that social phenomena as well as all others are regulated by laws; but as he lacked biological knowledge he failed in his endeavor to determine these laws, exaggerated the importance of climate, which is but a secondary circumstance, and made his social science end in a panegyric of the English constitution. Condorcet was aware of the fundamental

law of progress; but having engaged in the philosopher's war against the theological and feudal system, he condemned the great epoch of the Middle Ages because he did not understand it. If Comte was more fortunate in being able at last to found positive sociology it was because he came after Cabanis, Bichat and Gall, who laid the definite foundations of scientific biology.

But how comes it that in this enumeration of fundamental sciences psychology is passed over in silence? Is not here a gap that imperils the whole system? So at least Stuart Mill thought, and this was one of the chief reasons which prevented him from adhering to Comte's philosophy. Mr. Herbert Spencer in his vast philosophical synthesis inserted Principles of Psychology between his Principles of Biology and his Principles of Sociology. But it was Comte's opinion, as also that of Cabanis and Bichat, that pyschological functions are not to be studied apart from the organs which are their necessary conditions, and that there is consequently no need to separate psychology from biology. But this is a mere question of form, and should we infer therefrom that there is no psychology in Comte, we would be entirely wrong. How could this be lacking in a doctrine the essential principle of which is the historical development of human thought?

Comte, indeed, does not believe the subjective observation of the phenomena of the soul to be a scientific method of discovering their laws. He

severely criticizes Cousin's so-called psychological method. He tries, in order to connect the function with the organ, to assign to each faculty a distinct anatomic region in the brain; he very properly insists that man's intelligence shall no longer be considered as differing in kind from the instinct of animals; and he commends the study of comparative psychology and mental pathology. When he condemns the psychology of his predecessors he means above all Condillac and his school, whose analyses of "the origin of our ideas" were at the least as logical as they were psychological. Comte deemed them incomplete, false and dangerous, inasmuch as they tended to represent man as "a reasoning and isolated being." To him this was a twofold error; for, in the first place, affectional functions, feelings and passions, are infinitely more energetic in man, and play a far more decisive part in his life than intellectual functions; and, in the second place, the worst way to arrive at an understanding of man is to consider him individually, for there is no distinctively human phenomenon which is not at the same time a social phenomenon. We ought not to interpret humanity by man, but, on the contrary, we ought to interpret man by humanity. Therefore the self-analysis of an individual mind, however profound and acute we may suppose it to be, can never reveal the laws of knowledge. It is the development of mankind which alone permits us to discover the laws which govern the progress of the

human mind. This it was which enabled Comte to lay down the fundamental law of "the three stages;" in a word, a positive theory of knowledge is inseparable from sociology.

Positive philosophy, therefore, studies psychological phenomena as well as other natural phenomena; but it refuses to study them otherwise than it does the others, that is, to separate them from the other classes of facts with which they are connected and upon which they depend. It ignores here, as everywhere else, the consideration of causes and essences, and deals only with laws. It does not wonder that the opposition of metaphysicians is particularly strong and tenacious on questions in which morals and religion are particularly concerned.

In order to determine what science is, Comte, according to his method, contents himself with opposing the characteristics of positive to those of non-positive knowledge. Science deals not with facts, but with laws. The knowledge of a fact has no scientific value in itself; it is the same as regards the knowledge of any number of facts, which merely deserves the name of erudition. Science begins when we can substitute the prevision of phenomena for the direct observation of them; that is, when we have discovered the constant connection which permits us from the presence of a certain fact to infer another determined fact. Those who believe that the accumulation of facts constitutes science mistake a stone-quarry for an edifice.

Even very early and when still far from the positive method the human mind cannot be contented with the mere statement of facts. It demands a theory in order to group together those it is acquainted with, and to observe new ones. Just at this point the theological conception of nature is particularly valuable. As it arises spontaneously in the mind, its appearance does not depend upon the observation of phenomena, and yet it permits such observation, which gradually supplants it, first by a metaphysical, then by a positive view of nature.

The great school for positiveness is the science of mathematics. In this preëminently scientific study the mind learns, to use Descartes's own words, not to feed upon sham reasons. It becomes trained in the practice of the different forms of reasoning. Mathematics is the very school for logic. There is no other. We learn the art of seeking the truth only through seeking it; so that the education of the man of science should always begin with the study of mathematics. But though necessary, this study is not sufficient; nay, nothing would be so fatal to the advancement of our knowledge as the exclusive domination of the mathematical spirit over all the positive sciences.

Together with the rise of sciences of the inorganic world, astronomy, physics, and chemistry, the experimental method appears. It teaches the legitimate use of hypotheses, makes clear the idea of natural *laws*, and, in so doing, deals the most telling blow to the theological conception of nature.

The experimental method rids man of the error of taking himself to be the center of the world, reveals to him his inability to discover causes, and particularly final causes, and teaches him to gain a definite though limited power through the knowledge of laws. "Let us know, in order to foresee, in order to provide."

When we pass on from inanimate nature to the organic world, from physics and chemistry to biology, the positive method increases proportionately in richness. Instead of mathematical ciphering, which cannot be applied to such unsettled and complex phenomena, instead of experimenting, which is almost impracticable on living beings, the biologist will make use of the comparative method, which has been found to be so extremely fruitful. Moreover, while the sciences before named could examine isolated phenomena in pairs and determine the simple relations between antecedent and consequent, biological phenomena are so entirely subordinate to one another that he who studies them must constantly take into account the action of all upon each and of each upon all. Details here become intelligible only as referred to the whole. And this is truer still of sociology than of biology, since harmony in a human society is still more complex and abounding than in a living body, and since we must resort to history in order to understand it.

Each of the fundamental sciences, therefore, adds to the positive method something especially its own. The omission of any one of them would baffle any

attempt to organize the sciences that come after, and consequently the Positive philosophy which appears along with the last of them. Thus in the system of Auguste Comte there is a two-fold course to be pursued by the mind: first, an ascending course, starting from the lowest stage of reality, from the geometrical, the most simple and general of phenomena, and rising progressively to the highest degree, to social phenomena, the most complex and special of all. This summit being reached, a science both positive and universal is then constituted. Thereupon begins a descending course from sociology to the other sciences, in which the mind assigns to each of them from the standpoint of positive philosophy the goal it should pursue, the limit to its researches, and its proper subordination to the whole of human culture, which in turn is subordinate to morals and religion.

Comte endeavors in this way to secure at once the interconnection and the independence of the fundamental sciences. Nothing is further from his thought than to seek a single supreme law for all phenomena in the universe, as had been done by Saint-Simon, who fancied that he had found this law in Newton's universal attraction. Comte positively condemns any attempt to seek "such a unity at once chimerical and injurious." According to him, the different classes of phenomena which are the object of the fundamental sciences cannot be reduced one to another. They are conditions one

of another, but they are not identical, and as the simpler sciences are always naturally further advanced than the more complex, Comte recommends the latter to defend themselves against the encroachments of the former. Thus, physicists should beware of "the thralldom of algebra." There is in physical phenomena something which is not to be reduced to mechanics. Similarly, when we pass on from physics to chemistry, from chemistry to biology, from biology to sociology, there appears at each step a richer form of reality which we should fail to appreciate if we meant to explain "what is superior by what is inferior." The only unity which is necessary and sufficient in science is the unity of method, which secures "homogeneity of thought," and this unity has been effected by the organization of sociology.

The search for a single supreme law for all phenomena springs at bottom from the same instinct as the search for causes, ends, and substances; it is still the metaphysical instinct in search of the absolute. But Positive philosophy tends only to the knowledge of what is relative, as the only knowledge accessible to man. True, it seeks to reduce more special to more general laws; but it finds that there are laws which do not yield to this process. It establishes the unity of science only from a sociological point of view. Now, in one sense, sociology depends upon all otner sciences, and again, in another sense, it dominates them all.

Comte divides sociology into social statics and dynamics, according as it studies societies at a given period, or in the regular progression of their successive stages: it is the distinction between rest and movement, between order and progress. But the laws of statics themselves are to be discovered best by observing a society in action; since when a certain category of social phenomena undergoes a change, all the others, by virtue of their interdependence, vary simultaneously. Religion, art, morals, civilization, economic conditions, political constitution, scientific knowledge, are all so many aspects of social life, which may be said to be functions one of another.

The most general law of social statics, at least as regards human societies, was pointed out by Aristotle; it is the law of the separation of functions and of the combination of efforts. In fact, but for the separation of functions, societies would be mere agglomerations of families, and the division of labor would not exist, and yet this division is the necessary condition of a multiplicity of social phenomena: the increase of society, the formation of classes or castes, the divergence of ideas and manners, and lastly the institution of a dual government (spiritual and temporal) which, in Comte's beautiful definition, represents *l'esprit d'ensemble dans la société*.

Comte studies social dynamics in the development of civilized mankind, and more especially in that of the Caucasian race. Provisionally he omits

in his account of human evolution the black and yellow races, merely saying that they will be included in it later on when the more advanced part of mankind has fully reached the positive period. The essential law of social dynamics is *progress*. The ancients were inevitably ignorant of it. Though more or less dimly perceived by such modern thinkers as Pascal, Fontenelle, Turgot, and above all Condorcet and Kant, it could not find its definitive expression until the French Revolution had enabled men to conceive the ascending course from the Greco-Roman system to the system of the Middle Ages, and from the latter to the positive system. So long as the comparison was limited to the two former terms, an essential element was lacking for the idea of progress.

Progress does not necessarily mean bettering, or endless improvement. Progress, in sociology as elsewhere, merely expresses a succession of stages regulated by laws. "The present," said Leibniz, "is full of the past, and big with the future." The evolution undergone by a living being, all the phases it goes through from its embryo state to its adult form, is an excellent illustration of progress. "Progress," says Comte, "is the development of order." To conceive progress under its most general aspect, is to conceive order as susceptible of development; and this conception, wonderfully applicable to biological and sociological phenomena, also finds employment in mathematics. It is what Comte calls "an encyclopædic law," which

enables us, without reducing all the laws in the world to one law, to represent them to ourselves as "ordered and convergent."

We cannot here give even a summary analysis of the vast philosophy of history in which Comte develops his sociological law of progress; but we are already acquainted with its most general principle, which is the "law of the three stages." Comte shows how mankind must have passed from fetichism, which is the earliest form of the theological stage, and is to be met with even in superior animals, to polytheism, and from polytheism to monotheism: how afterwards metaphysics under the increasing impulse of the positive spirit reduced monotheism to more and more colorless and inconsistent forms of deism, and at last reached the positive period. Arrived at this point, the human mind does not deny the absolute (atheism is but another sort of theology, and a most untenable one); it merely abstains from seeking it, and is henceforth contented with seeking laws throughout the whole realm of reality. Thus does mankind pass from an initial homogeneous state, fetichism, to a final homogeneous state, positivism; between the two extremes lies the history of religions, civilizations, and philosophies,—a succession of necessary revolutions, the connection of which constitutes history.

Humanity, indeed, always seeks to make its conceptions agree with its observations, and this it accomplishes periodically. But, while the system

of conceptions at which it stops remains stationary the number of facts and laws observed is constantly increasing, and a moment comes when the equilibrium is again disturbed. Then the conceptions must once more be adapted to the acquired knowledge, and a new phase of equilibrium, as unstable as the preceding ones, is established. This same process had already led humanity out of its primitive theological state; for even then, some rudiments of the positive spirit were mingled with it. The most common phenomena occurred so regularly that man must have had at once a dim perception of the laws governing them; for instance, there seems never to have been any god of gravity. From this humble origin, and from necessity that spurred man's natural sloth, sprang the scientific spirit, which was the main factor in the evolution of the human understanding, and consequently of the whole of civilization.

It follows from this theory of progress that in all the systems of the past, in every religion, in every kind of metaphysics, the Positive doctrine meets no adversaries, but only precursors. These it does not need to refute; it accepts them as so many necessary links in the chain of the evolution of the human mind. "By ceasing to be absolute, Positive philosophy ceases to be critical of all the past." It alone can be just towards all philosophies. A Positive philosopher does not give up his right to judge, but he will not reproach a past epoch with having violated principles which it could not have

known. In short, without dropping into either fatalism or optimism, Comte does not permit us to expect the past to be otherwise than the evolution of progress permitted it to be. Thus from the historical point of view the Positive philosophy appears true to its relative character, and lays down a principle the consequences of which are far-reaching. History becomes "the sacred science" of the nineteenth century and the indispensable condition of all positive knowledge in morals.

This theory of progress, as well as the theory of knowledge, tends, with Comte, to substitute the consideration of mankind for that of the individual. We must no longer study the "Me" but the "Us." The *Γνῶθι σεαυτόν* which had been the principle of philosophical speculation since Socrates is replaced by the precept to civilized mankind: "Know thy history." Thus Comte's philosophy is indeed a "philosophy of humanity;" and through this central idea of humanity is effected the transition from the theoretical doctrine to morals, politics and religion.

Like Saint-Simon, and even more than Saint-Simon, Auguste Comte rejects the notion which the eighteenth century entertained of the Middle Ages. He sees in this period not a long night of barbarism, superstition and misery, but a time of fruitful work, in which the modern world was organized after a pattern superior to that of the ancients. One feature alone would be sufficient to

prove the superiority of the Middle Ages over antiquity: the existence of a spiritual power, the power of the popes, distinct from and independent of the temporal power of the princes, and capable, if needed, of counterbalancing the latter.

Comte is never weary of expressing his admiration for this "masterpiece of human wisdom" which for centuries preserved the unity of Christian Europe. It is his aspiration that the positive philosophy shall found a new spiritual power, which like the Catholic organization of the Middle Ages will be able to bring all minds together and to subordinate politics to morals. He also praises the moral teaching of the clergy in those centuries. We witness in this body an admirable social consciousness. Under a most felicitous and impressive form it made the individual feel the necessity of self-sacrifice and the worth of love; it bestowed upon all, humble and great alike, at least a minimum of philosophical instruction, as summed up in the catechism. In his later years Comte himself made the *Imitation of Christ*, together with Dante, his daily reading.

Unfortunately this moral teaching was fettered by dogma to a system of beliefs which the positive spirit has overthrown. As the ecclesiastical system of morals refuses to part with its beliefs, it is likely to meet with a similar fate, and we see in fact, that on many points the loss of religious beliefs is accompanied by a sort of moral decay which threatens even the institution of family. We

might be alarmed at this with good reason if the Positive philosophy, after having reorganized beliefs, were not prepared to reorganize morals likewise.

To begin with, moral phenomena, like all social phenomena, depend upon other series of simpler and more general phenomena in the universe. The behaviour of man is determined in its main features by the conditions of the world he moves in. Thus the place of the earth in the solar system, the recurrence of seasons, physical and chemical laws, especially the biological laws which determine the average duration of man's life, and finally sociological laws, all together constitute a powerful regulator of man's activity. Though for a long time ignorant of these laws, man was nevertheless subject to their action; knowing them now he will not foolishly attempt to elude them, but here as elsewhere he may turn his knowledge to account by making natural laws subservient as far as possible to the object he has in view, and in passing "from the natural to the artificial order," which is in this case the moral order. Thus, as Comte says in a beautiful maxim, were we more intelligent it would mean being more moral; for when better acquainted with the grand fact of human solidarity: that man exists only in humanity, we can not help seeing that the only sensible rule of conduct for us is "to live for others." And conversely, were we more moral, it would mean being more intelligent; for in prac-

tising this rule we should experience a vivid and immediate feeling of being united to our fellow-creatures.

Comte thinks with Cabanis and Gall that the "philosophers" of the eighteenth century misunderstood the moral nature of man in maintaining that nothing was innate but that it was altogether the product of education. On the contrary, like all animals we have propensities and inclinations with which we are born. Biology studies the relation of these to our organism, and sociology studies their influence upon our behavior, which depends upon them far more than upon reflection. These innate propensities are of two kinds. Some of them are egotistical, and prompt the individual to seek his own preservation, welfare and happiness; others are altruistic and induce him to be mindful of others in his actions, to love his neighbour, in short, to find his happiness in the happiness of others. The moral problem is, then, as follows: To make altruism, which is originally the weaker feeling, predominate over egotism, which is naturally the stronger; or, in a word, to make "humanity predominate over animalism." To suppress egotism is not in our power; it is even a dangerous chimera to think this desirable. Morality consists in subordinating it.

And mankind would not succeed even in this were not the constant action of that external regulator we have just mentioned at work in the same direction, encouraging a spontaneous kind of moral-

ity, of which reflective morality is but a continuation. For instance, family life and social life favor the almost endless increase of altruistic feelings and propensities. These may be developed at the same time in all the members of a social group, and are even increased by imitation and contagion. Selfish sentiments, on the contrary, cannot act without clashing against one another, and social life requires that a bridle be put upon all of them. But it is chiefly by the increase of intelligence and the development of Positive philosophy that the progress of morality may be secured, so far at least as our imperfect nature permits. For social science, by demonstrating the fundamental law of human solidarity, and by giving to the idea of order its fullest expression, shows at the same time that the claims of egotism are absurd, and that man is destined to "live for others."

Comte's ethics is not therefore to be numbered with sentimental systems of ethics. It is rather a translation into positive language of the systems based upon the universal order, such as that of Spinoza or Leibniz. Only Comte separated it from its theological and metaphysical principles. Morality, as well as science, previously considered as absolute, has now become relative. One and the same law has prevailed in the evolution of the human conscience and of the human intellect.

We live *in* Humanity and *through* Humanity, says science. We must live *for* Humanity, says morality. Thence follow a pedagogy, a statecraft and a

religion closely linked together, and based on the same principles.

Education is to be directed entirely towards securing the harmony of minds. The object is to fill them with strong common convictions, and in this positive science and philosophy alone can succeed. Not that it is incumbent upon everyone, or even possible for everyone, to test the value and certainty of this science and philosophy. And it is sufficient that those who are able to do so should find in them nothing that their reason refuses to accept. Others must trust to the testimony of those who have made this test. How many men are now qualified to criticize and verify the theory of the solar system? Yet everybody accepts it, and this confidence is considered to be reasonable. It will be the same with all philosophy when we have fully entered the positive period; and the unanimity of assent will then produce an intensity of belief we can with difficulty picture to ourselves.

Comte's statecraft can hardly be separated from his religion, its first principle being the distinction between the temporal and the spiritual power. The latter is to be the prerogative of a clergy composed of men of science, who are to be at the same time the educators of youth and the priests of that humanity which is the supreme object of Comte's religion. Humanity, which he also calls the "Great Being," is defined as "the union of all beings, past, present and future, who freely contribute to the perfection of the universal order."

Its two essential attributes are solidarity and continuity. The solidarity of human society is the closest and most perfect one offered by nature. It is a wonderful thing to observe how all the functions of society are performed with unchanging order, even in times of war and revolution,—all the more wonderful since those who severally contribute to it often think only of pursuing their own selfish ends. This happy harmony does not prevent the competition of individuals from remaining essentially free, and does not repress personal efforts. There is no greater error than to compare men to the cells of an organism or to the branches of a polyp. In the society depicted by Comte the individuality of each member of the body is quite compatible with the unity of the body.

A still more marked characteristic of the "Great Being" is continuity. Thanks to this, human society, alone among all, has a history; thanks to this, the inheritance of past generations is handed down to the following generations; thanks to this, science, art and civilization are progressing. Comte found a striking way of expressing this continuity. "Humanity," he says, "is composed of more dead men than living men." This is no figure of speech; Comte means his statement to be taken literally. Even as Humanity is not an abstraction, but a reality as real as the individuals of whom it is composed, so do the dead actually live again in us.

Comte substitutes for the metaphysical idea of the immortality of the soul the positive idea of

incorporation into the "Great Being." Men whose behaviour has been deserving do not wholly die; they continue their existence in others by virtue of the continuity of society. Man has, therefore, two kinds of existence. During the first, he participates in social life as an individual. If he undergoes this trial honorably, that is, if he subordinates in himself egotism to altruism, he enters after his death into a second existence, the better part of him is incorporated into the spiritual life of Humanity. This form of immortality is free even from the laws of space and number. In how many men has not the soul of Jesus or of Plato risen from the dead? One can understand how the soul thus idealized should end only with the "Great Being." This leads naturally to the commemoration of the dead, that is, to the institution of feasts in which the living representatives of Humanity celebrate the memory of its benefactors who have made it what it now is.

Thus is established the religion of Humanity, the crown of Comte's philosophy. He defines religion as "a state of perfect harmony." Considered in the individual, it is what regulates or fixes in him the relations between feeling, intelligence and action. Considered in society, it is what brings men together, or harmonizes their mutual intercourse. The part played by religion has been an exalted one in the history of mankind. It has been both the agent and the essential sign of progress. The great law of social dynamics, the law

of the three stages, marks the process of human understanding by the succession of religious forms, fetichism, polytheism, etc. The part of religion will be no less important in the positive period. The religion of reason does not combat revealed religious, but rather considers itself as their heir-at-law, and looks upon religious history as "a long minority of Humanity under the guardianship of God." And if henceforth religion has for its object, instead of an absolute, perfect and eternal Being, an imperfect, conditioned and transient being, it will not be on that account any less fervent or any less beneficent.

In his *Politique Positive*, and in his subsequent works, Comte undertook to prescribe in their minutest details the dogmas, worship, and management of the new religion. He took pattern from the Catholic organization, which he looked upon as a masterpiece. This caused Huxley to say that Comte's system was "Catholicism minus Christianity." A great many of the disciples who had gathered round the founder of the Positive philosophy refused to submit to the High Pontiff of the religion of Humanity. Those dissenters had a right to resume their liberty from the moment when the doctrine of the master ceased to meet with their assent. But they went further. They maintained that it was not they who abandoned Comte, but Comte who abandoned himself; that he was unfaithful to his own principles and to the positive spirit, and that in the *Politique Positive* he was instituting,

in accordance with the subjective method, a second philosophy in contradiction to the first.—It is true that Comte's last works have a strong sentimental and mystic coloring which is absent in his first works. No doubt also there is something offensive and almost ridiculous in the pedantic precision of the details into which he enters in organizing the religion of Humanity. But the unity of his philosophical thought is unquestionable. He vindicated it victoriously against those whom he calls "incomplete Positivists." "I have devoted my life," he says, "to deriving from the science of the real the necessary foundations of sound philosophy in accordance with which it was fitting for me to construct the true religion." And to close the discussion with an unanswerable argument, he reprinted at the end of the *Politique Positive* his first youthful pamphlets, written nearly forty years previous, in which we find the same leading ideas throughout the doctrine, and see the establishment of a definitive religion to have been its supreme object.

Therefore, whatever Littré may say to the contrary, there were not two successive and opposing philosophic systems propounded by Comte. There was only one, which comprises at once his method, his statecraft, and his religion. Yet the division of the school corresponds to a real distinction within the system. In one part of his philosophy Comte represents the general tendencies of his century; in another he expresses more especially the particular aspirations of the generation to which he belonged.

This part, perhaps the most dear to its author, "the thought of his youth realized in his riper years," the creation of a new religion, was, moreover, the one which almost immediately withered. The other remained full of life, and has not yet ceased to bear fruits.

Comte considers himself as the upholder and corrector of the philosophy of the eighteenth century in France, and as the successor of Descartes, whose work he completes. The inheritance of the eighteenth century is handed down to him by Condorcet, his "spiritual father"; but he is also deeply influenced by Joseph de Maistre, who points out the negative and destructive character of this philosophy. Comte does not seek to reconcile them (which would indeed be impossible), but to discover a higher point of view from which he will take in at a glance what truth there is in both. This point of view he finds on the summit of the positive social science.

Descartes had considerably advanced the positive spirit; he was really one of the creators of modern philosophy. But he had attempted to group together into a system all the natural sciences after a mathematical method, and the inadequacy of such a mode of procedure appeared more and more obvious as he applied it to more and more complex phenomena. Thus in biology he was led to the untenable paradox of animal automata; and when he came to man and society he was suddenly compelled to lay aside the positive method and to

adopt once more the metaphysical. The fault does not lie with him but with the state of sciences in his time, for chemistry hardly existed then, and physiology was yet unborn. Comte takes up again Descartes' work, perfects and completes it. On the one hand he abstains from representing the physical universe as a mechanism, but he states at once the interdependence and the independence of the various classes of phenomena. On the other hand he extends the positive method to the study of *all* natural phenomena, even the most complex, thus finally securing the victory for the positive spirit.

Comte is therefore a descendant of the earlier French philosophers. Between the philosophy of Descartes and his own we may observe the links in the chain, the chief of which are forged by Fontenelle, Montesquieu, Diderot, D'Alembert, Condorcet, Cabanis, and Bichat. Comte understood thoroughly the import of the scientific work accomplished in the preceding century; he had also a presentiment of the powerful influence which the development of historical science was to exercise upon men's minds. He perceived clearly that, under the influence of a philosophy which renounced the pursuit of the absolute, the aim of all moral, political, social and religious endeavor would be entirely transformed.

So that, however vehemently the value of Comte's system may be disputed when it assumes to take the place of either the philosophies or the

religions of the past, we are compelled to recognize almost everywhere in the present century the underlying spirit of his doctrine. And not only the philosophies but the historical and scientific work and even the romance and the art of our times are deeply permeated by this spirit.

CHAPTER XIV

RENAN AND TAINE

RENAN possessed, first and foremost, a marvellous gift of style. He at once took rank among classical writers beside the great masters of French prose. He was also a historian. Whatever may be the judgment of posterity regarding the *Origines du Christianisme* and the *Histoire du Peuple d'Israel*, the undertaking was a great one, and marks an epoch in this sort of study in France. But was Renan really a philosopher? In this field do we find in his numerous books anything beyond maxims, opinions, beautifully expressed, but without any bond of unity and inner coherence? Though he shuns all dialectic display, and is careful never to give demonstrations, is there ever found in his writings a consistent and solid nucleus, a body of principles ensuring the continuity of his thought amidst apparent changes, paradoxes and ironies? Renan himself certainly thought that there was. To this not only his *Dialogues Philosophiques*, but his *Drames Philosophiques*, and above all, *L'Avenir de la Science*, testify expressly. The rest of his productions, also, and even his most special works of technical scholarship, as those on linguistics, had evidently in his mind a philosophical bearing.

After the example of his master, Burnouf, he believed that the greatest results could often be obtained from the minutest analysis of details. The philosopher in him always stood at the elbow of the philologist.

Various causes may have rendered him liable to misinterpretation. First, the particular nature of his style; he is fond of delicate shades and tints of meaning, and averse to peremptory and sweeping assertions. He must have seemed often a dilettante, who delighted in toying with ideas; and we cannot deny that he was pleased with his own suppleness. But this suppleness was not incompatible with a serious mind and a respect for truth. We must so completely respect truth, says Renan, as never to overstate it; and we already overstate truth if we present it without the restrictions, the extenuations, the shades, and even the doubts it implies. "A thoroughly complete work ought to leave no need for a refutation." The reverse of every thought ought to be pointed out, that the reader may see at one glance the two opposite faces of which every truth is composed; though this twofold way of thinking may occasion some uneasiness in readers who are fond of simplicity.

Furthermore, it is true that Renan's philosophy varied, not on the chief points, but in details, and above all, in the tone of expression. Being not only much inclined to take a broad view of the world and of mankind, but also very sensitive to the events he witnessed, Renan felt keenly the

shock with which these events reacted on him, as is shown by his works. The revolution of 1848 and the June days, the *coup d'état* which made Napoleon the Third an emperor, the disasters of 1870, the final success of the Republican party in 1878, all in their turn exercised a powerful influence upon Renan's mind, giving it, however, rather a different coloring than a new direction. Finally, last but not least among the reasons which may have caused Renan's philosophy to be misconceived, it is not of a regular, and so to speak, classical type. It is not fashioned in the usual form. Its problems are not proposed or solved in the customary terms. The reason for this is that Renan composed his philosophy for his own use, under the pressure of needs peculiar to himself, such as most other men of his generation did not feel as he did. That he was able to communicate these needs to them is not the least part of his glory.

Like Lamennais and Father Gratry, Renan went from the Roman Catholic Church to philosophy. But there is a wide difference between them and him. Lamennais, after having given his whole strength to attacking, with the Traditionalists, the philosophy of the eighteenth century, went on to develop the social principles he discerned in the Gospel, and to work out the conception of a Christian democracy. In his contest with Rome he did not in the least assail the real essence of faith; and he was justified in entitling one of his most vigourous pamphlets *Paroles d'un Croyant*. Father Gratry thought he

had found a philosophical proof of what is taught by religious dogmas, or at least by part of them. His "transcendental method," justified, as he thought, by its analogy with the transcendental method used in mathematics, led him to the much-desired reconciliation of reason and faith. Renan's case is quite different. Born and bred in the Catholic faith, brought up in the thought and hope of becoming a priest, never having conceived any other ambition, and being encouraged therein by his family and by his teachers, he perceived at the age of twenty that his belief was no longer sufficient. He had ceased to be a Roman Catholic, and even, in the strictest sense of the word, to be a Christian. He had to break off all his cherished ties and to give up all his fondest hopes. He had to go back into the world and begin life anew.

In what terms was the philosophical problem to present itself to him? In terms, no doubt, quite different from those which occurred to such men as Maine de Biran, Cousin, or even Auguste Comte. His situation was unique. He wanted a doctrine which would restore to him all that he had lost in losing faith, which would, without having recourse to the supernatural, supply him with an acceptable interpretation of the universe, and at the same time with a certain rule of conduct. Had he examined the whole of the problem—had he begun, as Descartes did, by temporarily considering as false all that he had hitherto thought and believed—he would have entered upon an undertaking unsuited to his

character and perhaps beyond his power. He adopted a less radical solution. Instead of developing his doubt logically, he set limits to it. Of the whole system of belief that had been taught him, he rejected only what he saw clearly to be incompatible with his reason—that is to say, with science and criticism; he kept all the rest, and out of it constructed a doctrine which remained essentially religious. What he could no longer admit was the historical husk of religion, the narrow, one-sided notions, the myth that falls before the blows of criticism, the assumption of a supernatural character in the Christian revelation; whereas he knew that we have here to deal with a phenomenon in all respects similar to that of the appearance of Buddhism, Islamism, etc. But in the very essence of religion, the mystery of divinity, and of man's participation in it, Renan did not cease to believe.

His philosophy must therefore needs be a secularized and rationalized form of his faith. He was sorry for a rupture which grieved his dearest friends, but there was within him neither the anguish of moral upheaval nor an intellectual crisis. "To all these outward revolutions there corresponded no inward revolution. I have learned several things, but I have changed in nowise as to the general system of intellectual and moral life. My habitation has become more spacious, but it still stands on the same ground. I look upon my estrangement from orthodoxy as only a change of opinion concerning

an important historical question, a change which does not prevent me from dwelling on the same foundations as before. I accept and preserve all the practical and speculative traditions of my past, intending subsequently to correct them by the logical results of my thoughts and studies."

Thus Renan's philosophy does not stand in opposition to religion, and has no intention of taking its place. Nothing can replace religion. It forms part of the very definition of humanity. Without it man falls to the level of the brute. Had Renan been obliged to choose between positive religion, with its mythical elements, and an abstract system of philosophy, devoid of all religious feeling, he would not have hesitated; he would have chosen the positive religion. But happily this dilemma was not presented. The task of our time, one not impossible of accomplishment, consists precisely in preserving all the essential part of religion in a free and harmonious philosophy. We must, therefore, "transfer religion into the region of the unassailable, beyond special dogmas and supernatural belief." Such a philosophy must also take into account all the elements of intellectual and moral life, which Christianity did not do. It totally neglected what is true and beautiful. It looked upon philosophy, poetry and science as so many vanities. Human nature was thus deprived of some of its most essential members. Among intellectual things, which are all alike holy, a distinction was made between the profane and the

sacred. A fatal distinction! Whatever comes from the soul is sacred.

Imagine Malebranche having read Gœthe, Kant, and Hegel, having studied under Burnouf and understood Lamarck's theories. If, instead of looking down upon the history of the human mind as a futile picture of what others have thought, the proud Oratorian had consented to look at the world and at humanity, how much wider his horizon would have become! from how many prejudices he would have freed himself! He would have beheld the endless meanderings of legend and history and the infinite web of divine creations; and though the sight might have bereft him of his narrow faith, it would have given him instead a sense of true theology, which is the science of the world and of humanity, the science of universal development (*Werden*), which leads, under the aspect of worship, to poetry and art, and above all, to morals.

Such a nineteenth-century Malebranche Renan tried to be.

Could Renan have lived all his life long in the same state of mind and soul as his religious teachers, who "made him acquainted with perfect virtue," he would have counted himself happy, and would have been spared many struggles. But is one free to believe or to reason as one may prefer? Is it our fault if belief in the supernatural gives way before the science of nature, if belief in the sacred narratives gives way before philological science?

At least, in this inevitable evolution man loses nothing which is of vital importance to him. Only that is destroyed which is already falling to decay; everything else is still found in science. Were it not so, science would be, as the Jansenists said, a vanity.

It is a great error to take its object to be either the amusement of the mind or the increase of man's material welfare. No doubt these advantages must not be despised. It is true that curiosity is a mark of man's intellectual nobility, and material progress is, in one sense, the indispensable condition of other and higher forms of progress. But the real value of science lies elsewhere. We require a symbol. Religion gave us one ready-made; science takes it away from us by depriving us of our faith in the supernatural. Science owes us another. It is in duty bound to explain man to himself, in the name of human nature as a whole, which is the only lawful authority. To live without a general idea of the world is not really to live a man's life. Science must supply such an idea. If you rob science of that, you take away its real worth and leave it nothing but an insipid residue, fit at the best to be thrown to those who are satisfied with dregs. If the old faith disappears, let science put a critical faith in its place.

What, then, is this science, for which Renan expresses such a lofty ambition, and which he extols so enthusiastically at five-and-twenty years of age, in *L'Avenir de la Science?* Sometimes it

means for him the physical and biological sciences which have taught man to find out his true place in the universe and no longer to believe himself the end of creation. But it most often represents the group of those sciences which were more familiar to Renan—that is, historical and philological sciences. It was from these that the supernatural received the finishing stroke. It was these that gave rise to exegesis, and after exegesis to the science of comparative religion, which made the old faith impossible. As a natural, though perhaps deceitful consequence, it was in them also that Renan expected to find the principle of his new faith. He was so much struck by what they had been able to effect that he had few doubts as to what they would still be able to accomplish. And does not history, indeed, seem to be the foundation of philosophy in our days? The new philosophy is, in one word, the science of humanity, and the science of a being which is in a state of perpetual evolution (*Werden*) can be nothing if not its history.

This was undoubtedly a rather narrow and unstable basis on which to erect the whole edifice of man's vital beliefs. Without speaking ill of historical science, who does not know that it is the most conjectural and unsafe of all? that its conclusions are always liable to revision, and vary, in fact, with each new generation of scientific men? And who better than Renan himself knew the weak sides of this science? Not only does he confess that the results of criticism cannot be proved, but

only perceived, but towards the end of his life he seemed quite to have lost his first illusion, and to have got bravely over the enthusiasm bred in him during his youth by the teaching of Burnouf and the works of German criticism. He almost regretted having given up his life to the historical sciences rather than to the natural sciences, which had taken such a hold upon him in the seminary at Issy. He "sees the inevitable end of them." A century hence mankind will know all it can know about its past, and then it will be time to stop, for it is characteristic of such studies that as soon as they have reached a state of relative perfection they begin to fall to pieces.

In spite of these melancholy reflections, it remains true that Renan's philosophy is founded upon history. Though not demonstrable like mathematical theorems, the results of criticism have yet a quite sufficient value; the tact of a judicious, methodical, conscientious mind is a very sure instrument for the discovery of truth when the discovery is possible. And the inevitable uncertainty of history as to details in nowise diminishes the force of the conclusions which may be drawn from comparative philology, exegesis, and the history of languages and of religions. And on the other hand, these sciences have the valuable privilege of making us understand the nature of development and of progress. They thus introduce us to the only philosophy which can henceforth explain the world, humanity, and God Himself.

The idea of progress, which is at the basis of Comte's philosophy, plays, therefore, a no less important part in Renan's. But Comte, while applying the idea of progress to every class of phenomena, endeavours to use it always in a strictly scientific and positive sense. Renan attributes to it also a metaphysical sense. Progress means to him advancement towards perfection, towards the good and the beautiful, towards being and consciousness. "A sort of inner spring, urging all things towards life, and towards a more and more fully developed life, is the necessary hypothesis." This hypothesis forces itself upon our minds chiefly when we examine the history of mankind. If any result has been acquired from the immense development of historical knowledge at the end of the eighteenth and during the nineteenth century, it is the conviction that there is a life of mankind as there is a life of the individual man; that history is not a vain series of isolated facts, but a spontaneous tendency towards an ideal goal; that perfection is the centre of gravitation of mankind, as well as of everything that has life. Hegel was the first to set forth this truth with perfect clearness. The philosophy of history was founded the moment that this conception of progress was grasped by our reflection. Hitherto progress had come in a spontaneous way; it is to be henceforth the conscious aim of the efforts of the best of mankind.

There is, then, no reasoning with one who thinks that history is an aimless ebullition, a motion

without any resultant. "To us idealists," one doctrine only is true, the transcendental doctrine, according to which the chief end of mankind is to constitute a superior kind of consciousness, or, as people once used to say, to glorify God. This universe has an ideal aim, and is subservient to a divine end. This aim of the world is to make reason reign. To organize reason is the duty of mankind. "We are pretty nearly agreed," he says in the *Dialogues Philosophiques*, "that the aim of the world is the production of a reflective and more and more perfect consciousness. We know of no higher form of this reflective consciousness than humanity." And more briefly, in the *Avenir de la Science*, "Our creed is the reasonableness of progress."

This symbol, which is rather Hegelian than positivist, permits Renan to preserve in his science the objects of religion and metaphysics, only somewhat transformed; it is sufficient for him to substitute the standpoint of development for that of a changeless eternity. "God! Providence! soul! Good old words, rather heavy, but expressive and respectable." What is God to humanity if not the transcendental summary of its supra-sensible needs, the category of the ideal? As soon as we believe in liberty and in mind, we believe in God. To love God, to know God, is to love what is beautiful and good, and to know what is true. A religious man is one who knows how to find in everything its divine

part, not one who professes belief in some dry and unintelligible formula about divinity. In this view the old questionings as to the essence and attributes of God become useless. Let us cast aside, in thinking of the divine life, every notion relating to our transient life. Is this absolute being free and conscious? Questions of this sort may be answered equally well with yes or no. They imply an incorrigible anthropomorphic illusion. In like manner, we may say both that God is and that God will be. Only that can develop which exists already. But, at the same time, the universal task of all that exists is to make God perfect—that is, to realize the great and final resultant which is to close the circle of things by a supreme unity. . . . . Reason, after having organized man, will organize God. The immensity of time is here the chief factor.

Furthermore, let us beware lest these formulæ should lead us to an abstract idealism, and lest metaphysical speculation, instead of bringing us nearer to God, should only remove us farther from Him. God, as Kant clearly saw, is the product of moral consciousness, not of science or metaphysics. It is not reason, but feeling, that determines the idea of God. This is why poetry and religion on this point outweigh philosophy. The creed of progress implies only faith in the triumph of mind, virtue, and beauty. Let religions, therefore, continue to speak of God, and let us take heed lest in simplifying them we destroy them. Let us not proclaim ourselves superior to them. Their creeds are but a lit-

tle more mythical than ours, and they have immense advantages to which we shall never attain. The theology of the wise in our days might be summed up in the two following propositions, which leave the religious idea entirely undetermined: First, religion will be eternal among mankind; second, all religious creeds are assailable and perishable.

Miracles disappear together with supernaturalism, and for the same reasons. Providence, as understood by the vulgar, is a sort of thaumaturgy. Renan thinks that the true Providence is not separate from the constant order of things. He liked to quote this saying of Malebranche's, "God does not act through special volitions." Such truth as the religious instinct had perceived in the idea of Providence is found again in a purer form in the idea of progress. But science no longer ascribes to the Divine Person our petty modes of action and our paltry calculations. In nature, as in history, the ends attained seem to have been reached only by means of an extraordinary prodigality of efforts and attempts. There is an immense loss of germs. But forces spent in vain serve at least as wasted forces, if there must be such. We cannot apply to progress our human idea of finality. All that we can say is, that in the long run good triumphs over evil, and truth over error. The proof is that the world lives on and even moves forward.

Neither can we preserve the idea of the immortality of the soul such as it has been handed down to us by religious tradition. We could not do so

even if we chose, if we were sincere with ourselves. And if we no longer have this belief, how can we dare to demand it of others? God forbid, says Renan, that I should say that belief in immortality is not, in one sense, necessary and sacred. But I maintain that when a sceptic who does not believe in it preaches this comforting dogma to the poor in order to keep them quiet, this must be called swindling. It is paying with bills we know to be counterfeit; it is tempting the simple-minded man by an empty bubble away from the pursuit of reality. The old idea of immortality is a remnant of the conceptions of the primitive world. It ranks with the anthropomorphic representation of God. It supposes man to be composed of two substances, and would be greatly at a loss to explain how memory, consciousness and individuality in the one survive the destruction of the other. Let us frankly renounce this kind of spiritualism, which in its simplicity does not perceive how closely it borders upon materialism.

Let it be sufficient, in order to give satisfaction to the instinct in our hearts, to admit that all that has been sacrificed to progress will be found again on the farthest verge of infinity, in a sort of immortality which moral science will some day discover, and which will be to the fanciful immortality of the past what the palace of Versailles is to a child's toy-house. Belief in immortality implies nothing else than man's invincible confidence in the future. "Individuals live on after death in the collective

work of progress. No action dies." Later on, in the latter part of his life, Renan seems to have conceded somewhat more to individuality in the continuation of existence. Whoever has had a hand in the divine work will feel the divine work that has been accomplished, and will see his own share in it. We shall live again in the world we have contributed to make. Human life, upon its moral side, traces a small furrow, as with the point of a pair of compasses, on the bosom of the infinite. This arc of a circle drawn in God is as eternal as God Himself. It is in God's remembrance that all men are immortal.

This philosophy, or science, as Renan chose to call it, is undoubtedly religious, but it is surely not Christian. It is even in a sense anti-Christian. It renews what Malebranche termed the source of every heathen impiety; it denies creation and deifies nature. Jesus, says Renan, will always be my God. But Jesus is no longer the Redeemer of man from original sin. Man's nature has no need of being redeemed, for it is not corrupted, but has its part in the divine work of progress.

Thence come the fluctuations, rather apparent than real, in Renan's moral doctrine, which did not vary in its fundamental views. Now he protests that the morals taught by the Gospel will always be his, that Christian education has made him what he is, that he will be eternally grateful to it, and that it will prevent him from ever falling into low, frivolous habits. Again, he speaks to us most

admirably of his master Marcus Aurelius, glorifies his fortitude and his melancholy optimism. Still again, he wonders whether virtue may not be delusion, and runs the risk of scandalising Christian souls by declaring that beauty is quite as good as virtue. But all these sayings may be reconciled without supposing in Renan either a surprising instability of doctrine or a desire to astonish his readers. His conception of morals is, at the same time, natural, like that of Epicurus; rational, like that of Marcus Aurelius, and divine, like that of the Gospel. The comprehensive principles of his philosophy admitted of such a synthesis.

Yet he differs from Christian morals on an important point. Nature is divine. Man, who is one of nature's masterpieces, is not born actually good, but with the possibility of becoming so. All the evil in humanity proceeds from want of culture. Renan here agrees with the philosophers of the eighteenth century and their perfect confidence in human nature. "I, who have a cultivated mind, find no evil in myself, and in all things turn spontaneously to what seems to me most beautiful. Were all men's minds as cultivated as my own, all men, like myself, would be in the happy case of finding it impossible to do wrong. An *educated* man has but to follow the delightful bent of his inner impulse. He might adopt the motto of the Abbey of Thélème, 'Do thou as thou choosest,' for he cannot choose any but beautiful things. A virtuous man is an artist."

Shall we call this pride, or perhaps irony? To be sure, the author of Caliban did not shut his eyes to the fierce and base instincts that survived in the soul of the "improved gorilla." He knew how much time and how many efforts it has taken to accomplish the fragile work of civilisation. But the definition of humanity must be found in the ideal to which it dimly tends, and which some time it is to reach. Christianity was mistaken in making a virtue of humility. The foundation of our morality is the excellence, the perfect autonomy of human nature. We must not, therefore, define goodness as obedience to the will of a superior being. Nor must we impose upon man ascetic observances; to affect abstinence proves that we highly value the things of which we deprive ourselves. Plato mortified his body less than Dominique Loricat did, and no doubt he was more of a spiritualist.

Likewise, the imperative character of duty should not be too much insisted upon. We obey it, but we see the weakness of the arguments upon which it rests. We obey it, because we have faith in God, because we believe in progress, in good, and in the final victory of what is best, and this without any hope of personal reward. The same privilege of human nature which enables us to be religious—that is, to understand the divine work—also enables us to be moral—that is, to have a share in that work. "There is in man a faculty or a need, a capacity, in short, which is satisfied in our days by morals, and which has always been

satisfied, and always will be, by something of the kind. I understand that the word *morals* may in future times become inadequate, and may be replaced by another. For my particular use I prefer to substitute for it the word *æsthetics*. Let us remember that whatever is of the soul is sacred. Greece, which carried the beautiful to its utmost perfection, is as much entitled to the gratitude of men as Judæa, which taught them divine justice."

We cannot here enter, even summarily, into the details of Renan's political and social ideas; to summarise them would be simply equivalent to distorting them. They were among his favourite themes for reflexion; their wealth, their variety, and even their apparent incongruities, are indeed often somewhat puzzling. In order to account for this, we must remember the interest Renan took in contemporaneous events, and his tendency to make the whole of his ideas harmonise with them, though without changing those ideas in essential particulars. Moreover, the general optimism of his philosophy did not make him less clear-sighted, and could not prevent him from being aware alike of the folly of revolutionists and of the selfish absurdity of conservatives. Lastly, he himself confesses that his opinion on very important points became modified with time. In *L'Avenir de la Science*, when full of juvenile enthusiasm, and no doubt under the influence of socialist doctrines, he believed that science would finally enfranchise all mankind; he hoped to see all men rising to the new religion and

participating in full consciousness "in the organisation of mankind and of God." Later on, in the *Drames*, and chiefly in the *Dialogues philosophiques*, he understands how chimerical such a hope is; he considers it probable that the ignorant mass will always need to be ruled over by an intelligent aristocracy. He even conceives the idea of a few men holding in their hands, by means of their science, the fate of the globe, and reigning over mankind by the terror they inspire. But such a dream, even to Renan himself, was nothing but a sort of nightmare.

At the end of his life, as he looked back upon his juvenile works, he persuaded himself that upon the whole he had been right, and he remained faithful to his leading ideas. "Progress," he says, "save a few disappointments, has been accomplished in the direction I imagined. Like Hegel, I made the mistake of attributing too positively to mankind a central part in the universe. The development of humanity may possibly be of no more consequence than the moss or lichens growing over a damp surface. But still, in our eyes, the history of mankind preserves its supremacy, since mankind alone, for all we know, constitutes the consciousness of the universe. And even though life should disappear from our small planet before mankind has attained to the full consciousness which is its supreme aim, the attempt baffled here would succeed elsewhere, and the effort toward the realisation of God would not be lost. But for this supreme hope, life would be absurd, and this wretched com-

edy would not be worth playing. Did I not believe that mankind was summoned to a divine end, I should become an Epicurean, if I could, and if not, I should commit suicide. But virtue will be vindicated in the end."

Renan's philosophy is therefore really a kind of faith. Is it a philosophy as well? This is the question which we proposed in the beginning, and which the reader can now answer. Renan's doctrine certainly does not fulfil the idea once entertained of a philosophical system. Renan himself never thought of constructing one. With respect to metaphysics considered as a science, his attitude was that of a positivist. Every truth, he says, has its starting point in scientific experiment. It issues directly or indirectly from a laboratory or a library, for whatever we learn we learn by studying nature or history. "Philosophy is not a separate science; it is one side of every science. In the great optic pencil of human knowledge it is the central region where the rays meet in one and the same light." No doubt there is room for a logic or a criticism of the human mind, such as Kant attempted, but there is no room for vain and shallow metaphysical speculation.

But while abandoning its ancient dogmatic claims, philosophy is enriched, on the other hand, with the ideas of humanity and progress. The idea of humanity is the great boundary line between old and new philosophies. Carefully examine why the

old systems can no longer satisfy you, and you will see that it is because this idea is absent from them. In it there is a whole new system of philosophy. The moment that mankind is considered as a consciousness in process of formation and development, there is a psychology of mankind as well as one of the individual. There is, therefore, a science of the human mind, which is not only the analysis of the machinery of individual understanding, but the very history of the human soul

This philosophy was prepared by the eighteenth century in France, which clearly conceived the import of history. But in history itself it misapprehended the part of spontaneousness and exaggerated that of reflexion, so that it thoroughly understood nothing but itself. It did not see that primitive epochs were the creative epochs; it tried to explain everything with words of superficial clearness—"credulity," "superstition," "fanaticism"—and above all, it attacked religion in its essence, without seeing that it is as eternal as the human soul. The result was a dry, analytical, negative rationalism, satisfactory neither to the imagination nor to the heart, nor even to reason. A. Comte understood the import of history and the idea of progress. But he did not realise the deep variety of mankind. He was unacquainted with the East and India; he studied only the Western world, and even in this overlooked the details of history. Thence comes the arbitrary, artificial and already decrepit character of his building. Only historical

and philological sciences can do as much for the knowledge of humanity as the positive sciences have done for the knowledge of nature. And among those historical and philological sciences the science of religions is that which throws most light upon the past of mankind and the direction of progress. Thus, in writing the *Origines du Christianisme*, Renan thought he was writing the most necessary and philosophical book of the age.

It is time that reason should cease to criticise religions as being works raised against it by a foreign and rival power, and that it should at last recognise itself in all products of mankind. Religions are popular poems: systems of metaphysics are learned poems: the subject treated is fundamentally the same. No doubt, we may contrast religion and philosophy as we contrast two systems, but not without recognising that they have the same origin and rest on the same ground. The old controversy seemed to admit that religions have a different origin, and by this very admission it was led to abuse them. By growing bolder we shall become more respectful.

This attitude was a new one in France. With respect to religion people hitherto had scarcely known any middle ground between enmity and submissiveness. Renan took a position from which he did justice both to religion and to reason. He made the "philosophers" understand that religion, far from being the bane and disgrace of mankind, is, on the contrary, its very honour and life; to the sup-

porters of revealed religion he explained that nothing can prevail against truth when once it is known, and that supernaturalism must disappear when science has shown it to be false. But, he says, let us not mistake for irreligion a refusal to adhere to this or that belief which comes to us assuming to have been revealed. The man who takes a serious view of life, and employs his activity in the pursuit of a generous end, is the religious man. The frivolous and superficial man, who has no high morality, is the infidel.

Renan thus opposes religion to religions, as Rousseau had done, as Victor Hugo was just then doing. But he asserts, not without reason, that his criticism has done more for the preservation of religion than any apology. Religion, as he understands it, is very remote from what the philosophers call natural religion, a sort of paltry theology, without poetry and without effect upon mankind. True religion he takes to be only a way of viewing life as a whole, seeing under all things the ideal and divine meaning, and sanctifying the whole of life by purity of soul and loftiness of heart.

Renan remained a priest, in the main, as he said himself. He was a priest of a religion devoid of the supernatural element and tending to the realisation of good. It was the strictness of the Roman Catholic dogma which compelled Renan to abandon the Church. One easily sees how in a Protestant country he might not have been obliged to stand apart from the communion of worshippers,

and might even have exercised spiritual ministry, as Herder and Schleiermacher did. There are striking points of resemblance between him and the latter. Both addressed an incredulous and frivolous society, in which they tried to awaken the respect for religion and the sense of what is divine. Renan's success on this point exceeded even his hopes, and it might astonish the supporters of revealed religion to tell them, what is nevertheless true, that he brought back to them more souls than he led away. At least he showed by his own example that a man could think with the greatest freedom, be an evolutionist, a Hegelian, make a scientific study of the history of religions, and yet remain deeply religious. In him was best effected the harmonious blending of the rationalistic criticism of the eighteenth century and of the historical and religious tendencies of the nineteenth.

Had not "parallels" long been out of fashion, a parallel between Renan and Taine would inevitably occur to an historian of philosophy, as well as to an historian of literature, for seldom have two more different intellectual tempers been found. No doubt they have some features in common: a taste for history, a respect for facts, a feeling of distrust towards professional philosophers, and traces of the evolutionary tendencies of their time. But besides the fact that the one is perfectly supple and the other perfectly rigid, they do not set themselves the same problems, nor do they apply to them the

same method. Renan reached philosophy through religion and religious exegesis, Taine through ideology and philosophical criticism. Renan came from St. Sulpice, and Taine from the École Normale.

Taine's first master, the one whose influence upon him was most deep and lasting, was Condillac. Taine was astonished that people in France could have forgotten Condillac's method, "one of the masterpieces of the human mind," and adopted Eclecticism. He brings against Cousin and his disciples the charge that they lacked precision, proved but little, were chiefly orators, and were more concerned with producing an effect than with discovering truth. We ought, he thinks, to turn back to Condillac, whose mind was of unparalleled lucidity and precision. To nearly all the great questions he gave answers which the reviving theological prejudice and the importation of German metaphysics discredited in France in the beginning of the nineteenth century. But people will yet come back to him. Taine sets the example. The process which he calls analysis, and which is the very soul of his method; the principle of his psychology, that whatever is in the understanding may be reduced to sensation, and that sensations are "the very substance of human intelligence"; lastly, the psychological and logical theory of symbols and reasoning—all these things Taine owed to Condillac. In this sense he may be considered as a successor of the Ideologists.

Yet he does not confine himself to the continuation of their doctrine. Between them and him came Auguste Comte, who gave Taine the idea of a philosophy infinitely more comprehensive and closely linked to the advancement of science and history. Taine reproaches the Ideologists for having been scarcely anything but logicians. They lacked the sense of concrete reality, and they lacked a taste for it as well. They excelled in the theory of method, but not in its application. They called themselves followers of Bacon, and thought they were; but though their starting point was different from that of the Cartesians, they trod the same path, and like them, after making a slight appeal to experience, they abandoned it. They studied *man* without noticing the differences which exist between *men*.

Now, Taine, on the contrary, was, like Renan, fully aware of the diversity of races and civilisations. Man is not to him an abstract entity. Taine would have us think of him with his individual features and physical characteristics, his size, the colour of his eyes and hair, his garments, his moral peculiarities, his beliefs, his customary gestures—in short, with all that constitutes his visible and invisible being. To apply Condillac's analysis to men thus conceived was one of Taine's favourite modes of procedure.

Next to Condillac, Spinoza and Hegel were his masters. He went deeply into their doctrines, which produced such a strong impression upon him

that he thought he would never again feel such another. This sensationalist who thinks man's intelligence to be composed of sensations and symbols, this positivist and empiricist who limits science to facts and their laws, this phenomenalist who defines the ego as a collection of sensations, is also a metaphysician who does not shrink from transcendental problems. Now he inclines towards an almost purely Spinozian conception of nature, looking upon the physical and moral nature of man as two aspects of one and the same essential reality, which is developed according to a law of absolute necessity; and again he conceives of the evolution of being rather as Hegel does. If he abstained almost wholly from metaphysics, it was owing to the scruples he had as a man of science; metaphysics must not be mixed up with the positive investigations of the psychologist and the historian. But he does not at all consider metaphysical speculation wrong or fruitless in itself. He leaves the questions open. He even has a glimpse, though but vaguely, of the possibility of a kind of metaphysics founded on experience, which by a methodical advance should attain to the supreme law, the primitive formula from which the whole of reality might be deduced.

And lastly, beneath the sensationalist and the metaphysician there lay hidden in Taine the soul of a true Stoic, who chose Marcus Aurelius as his model in life, and who possessed the same noble and deep conception of the world, the same disillu-

sionised serenity, and the same lofty disinterestedness.

If we disregard this inward life, which Taine concealed with jealous care, can we at least see how he joined together the two apparently so contradictory conceptions of the universe, the empirical and the metaphysical, in which he took equal interest? From what point of view did he reconcile in his own mind Spinoza and Hume, Hegel and Condillac? The reconciliation is brought about by means of *abstraction*. This "beautiful faculty, the source of language, the only real distinction which, according to its degree, separates men from brutes and great men from common ones," is the power of isolating elements from given facts and of considering them apart.

Abstraction constitutes a transition between the world as it is revealed to our senses and the world as it is understood by our intelligence. There are two great aspects of nature, "two kingdoms," that of complex facts, and that of simple elements. The former is the result and the latter the cause. The former is contained in the latter, and deduced from it as a consequence is deduced from its premise. Both are of equal value; they are one and the same reality viewed in two different lights. This magnificent moving world, this tumultuous chaos of intricate events, this unceasing life, infinitely varied and many-sided, are reducible to a few elements and to the relations between them. To pass on from one of the aspects to the other, from

complexity to simplicity, from facts to laws, from experiments to formulæ, is the work of abstraction. "English philosophy ends in considering nature as an assemblage of facts; German philosophy looks upon it chiefly as a system of laws. If there is a place midway between the two nations, it belongs to us Frenchmen. We amplified the English ideas in the eighteenth century: we can in the nineteenth give precision to the German ideas. What we have to do is to temper, amend and complete the two spirits one by another, to fuse them into one, to express them in a style that shall be intelligible to everybody, and thus to make of them the universal spirit."

Such, then, is the position assumed by Taine, intermediate between English Empiricism and German metaphysics. If he seemed to incline rather towards Empiricism, it was because he found himself confronted by Eclecticism. This doctrine postulated rational principles independent of experience, and Taine had first to combat what he deemed a feeble imitation of Cartesianism or of German metaphysics. But when in presence of such Empiricism as that of Stuart Mill, for instance, Taine, on the contrary, defends the principle of causality and gives to it an absolute value. He shows that a collection of facts is not science, and he maintains the possibility of rising to a general conception of the universe. Abstraction permits him thus to stand as an arbiter. Only the philosopher must make a methodical use of it, and instead of try-

ing to construct the world *a priori*, as the German metaphysicians have been rash enough to do, he must draw the elements of his building from reality itself. On this condition "the moral as well as the physical universe may be held in the palm of our hand," and an abstract formula may represent the immense variety of things as easily as an equation represents a curve.

In perfect conformity with these principles, Taine had not only a passion for minute details, for characteristic and special facts, the search for which delighted him in Stendhal and in the Goncourts, but also a taste for general and abstract formulæ, going so far as to say that a man, a nation, a civilisation, are "walking theorems." To rise by successive steps of abstraction from the most minute facts to the most comprehensive laws, is the very object of science, and the method to be employed in moral sciences does not essentially differ on that score from that of the physical sciences.

Whether the facts are physical or moral is of no consequence; they always have causes. There are causes for courage or ambition, as well as for digestion or respiration. Every species of human production—literature, music, painting, philosophy, science, industry, etc.—is directly caused by a moral disposition or a combination of moral dispositions. The cause being given, the production appears; take the cause away and it disappears. The link between them is the same as that between a phys-

ical phenomenon and its antecedent conditions, between the dew and the cooling of the surrounding air, between expansion and heat.

To the consideration of "causes," borrowed from physics, we must add that of "dependencies" and "conditions," derived from biology. If we study a man, a nation, a race, a century, we shall find that the thousand details to be observed in them may be classified under certain headings, certain general qualities which may be expressed in seven or eight formulæ. We shall furthermore notice that these formulæ are all interdependent, and that the qualities vary, as if mathematical functions one of another. And finally, we shall reach the fundamental property which Taine, with Condillac, calls the "primitive fact," the generating cause, from which all others can be deduced. "Between a bower at Versailles, one of Malebranche's philosophical and theological arguments, a precept of versification by Boileau, a mortgage law of Colbert, an antechamber compliment at Marly, and one of Bossuet's sentences on the sovereignty of God, the distance seems infinite. The facts are so dissimilar that at first sight we deem them isolated and separate. Yet the facts are connected with one another by the definitions of the groups within which they are comprised. Each of them is an action of *that ideal and general man* around whom all the contrivances and peculiarities of the time are grouped." With this "ideal and general

man" abstraction reaches its final term; all the causes are united into one supreme formula.

These causes are made up of "dependencies" and "conditions," and were they better known to us, history would be like everything else, only a problem of mechanics. The only difference is that the quantity and direction of moral forces cannot be measured in a mathematical way. But we can at least determine in every historical development the three primordial causes, which are race, environment, and time. Does not Taine here, in this idea of social solidarity and continuity, return to what Auguste Comte termed the objective conditions of the development of societies?

The *History of English Literature* is the most celebrated production due to this method, which, according to Taine, is applicable to all moral sciences. After a period of very great favor, this process has been severely criticised and finally abandoned. Without here examining whether this fate was deserved or not, we must confess that the method lacks precision. The very lavishness of Taine's "illustrations" is a proof of this. Moral sciences, and particularly history, he compares successively to mechanics, mineralogy, physics, chemistry, zoölogy, anatomy, and natural history in general. In spite of all these comparisons, or rather because of them, the reader is left puzzled. Taine did not see that it was necessary for him to choose for the method of moral and social sciences

between the geometrical and mechanical conception, based on the relations between consequences and principles, and the biological conception, based on the harmonic relation of the different parts with one another and with the whole. So, in spite of the powerful streams of light sent forth by his style, there are interfering rays which make spots of shadow and cast obscurity upon his theory.

Taine's strictly philosophical work comprises *La Philosophie de l'Art* and *De l'Intelligence*. For *La Philosophie de l'Art* Taine assumes an intermediate position between realism and idealism, in accordance with his general attitude between empiricism and rationalism. He is a realist in principle, since he defines art as the imitation of nature; but he is also an idealist when he adds that the object of this imitation is to express the essence of things by means of their "essential characteristic." This essential characteristic is a quality from which all others, or at least many others, are derived according to fixed connection. This characteristic being determined, we must be able to deduce from it all the others, as from the jawbone of a fossil Cuvier deduced all the organs of the carnivorous animal.

The production of a work of art is, moreover, determined by a mass of conditions which are summed up in race, environment, and time. Taine has been charged with exaggerating the importance of these conditions, and not taking sufficiently into account the individuality of the artist. It never-

theless remains a fact that in his theoretical and historical considerations upon art he presented many ingenious and instructive views. He showed admirably by numerous examples how any art was at a given moment the living expression of a whole civilisation, and how each was to be understood only by means of the other.

When Taine's book, *De l'Intelligence*, appeared, the psychology taught and generally accepted in France was that of Cousin, Garnier, and Jouffroy. It was based upon observation by consciousness and reflexion, and was mainly devoted, as it seemed, to the defence of a spiritualistic metaphysics. Taine deemed this doctrine vague and incapable of progress, and wanted to substitute for it a scientific psychology. If psychology is a science, he says, its object is to discover unknown facts, inaccessible to direct observation. In order to make these discoveries, it must, like other sciences, find a substitute for the observing instrument and modify the object observed. It will therefore have recourse to experiment whenever that is possible—to physiology, to the organs of the senses, to mental pathology, to the study of phenomena connected with hypnotism and double personality, to the observation of children and animals, etc. Taine's work, *De l'Intelligence*, gives a good idea of the state of science with regard to psychological questions at the time when it was written. If it has grown out of date, it is in the same way as treatises on physics or physiology, owing to the very progress of sci-

ence. Cerebral anatomy and physiology have been completely renewed during the last forty years. Even the analysis of sensations, which Taine set forth in such a masterly way, no longer corresponds to the present state of our knowledge.

Besides this strictly psychological part, *De l'Intelligence* also contains a theory of knowledge and an attempt to frame a metaphysical theory of the soul. The theory of knowledge, as might be expected, is chiefly a study of abstraction. It is by abstraction that we are enabled to infer from particular facts a general idea, and from several general ideas another more general still, and so on, step by step, always progressing according to natural order, by a continuous analysis, with expressive notations, after the example of mathematics, which passes on from finger-reckoning to figure-reckoning, and thence to letter-reckoning. Truth resides in things, and in order to discover it we need only "resolve things into their elements, note these elements with precise symbols, collect these symbols into exact formulæ, reduce these formulæ one to another, and go on by means of equations till the final equation is reached, which is the desired truth." Taine's conception of science is perhaps that of Bacon; his method certainly is that of Condillac. But Taine claims to rise by this method to a Spinozian or Hegelian view of the universe, which neither Bacon nor Condillac would have accepted.

Finally, his general conception of the activity of the soul is Associationism. Had he not been

familiar with the works of Spencer, Bain, Stuart Mill, and all the English Associationist school, the method of Condillac and of the Ideologists would nevertheless have led him to this theory. Our conscious sensations, remembrances, desires, etc., are, according to Taine, composed of unconscious elements. The object of psychological analysis is precisely to isolate these elements. It is a sort of mental chemistry, even more advanced than chemistry properly so called. For the latter has to deal with a great many elements, called simple substances, which it has not yet been able to decompose, whereas psychological analysis has discovered the one simple element of which all the diversity of psychological phenomena is composed. This common element, which, perpetually repeated, constitutes all our ideas, is sensation. We are thus in possession of the "first fact," and from it we are able to deduce the whole "mechanism" of intelligence and of psychical life in general. Psychology in our days finds it difficult to believe that a state of the soul is composed of simpler elements, as a crystal is composed of molecules, and Associationism has lost many of its partisans.

To conclude, there seem always to have been in Taine not one but two co-existing philosophies, to both of which he clung all his life with equal tenacity. One is a philosophy of sensation. With it are connected his criticism of the Cartesian spirit, his professed taste for the varied forms, sounds,

colours, peculiarities, and singularities of beings; the character of his style, and his kinship with Flaubert, the Goncourts, Zola, and in general with the art of his time. The other sees in the universe a system of laws, and limits the infinite diversity of reality within a small number of formulæ, more and more comprehensive till we reach a supreme formula, which comprises all others, and consequently, the whole of reality; on this side Taine sympathised with Spinoza and Hegel. No doubt abstraction helped him to pass from one system to the other. But does he not put too much confidence in the virtue of symbols and formulæ, and does he not demand of this process more than it can give, when he finds in it a reconciliation between the empirical and the rationalistic conception of the world? Stuart Mill, on the one hand, and Kant, on the other, are not so easily to be brought together by this newer form of Condillac's method. And thus there remains in Taine's doctrine an ineradicable taint of duality, the influence of which is felt throughout his works. Though an admirable writer, there is always in his representation of reality something geometrical and abstract. He constructs the *Ancien Régime*, he constructs the Jacobin, he constructs Napoleon; and these constructions, in strict conformity with his method, are extremely brilliant, but more or less artificial. The formula meant to express, in an abstract way, the characteristic common to a collection of facts often proves unequal to the harmonious unity of life.

However, the defects of Taine's method and the weak points in his philosophy did not become apparent at once. His contemporaries were chiefly struck by the beauty, the power, the originality of the works which it inspired. His influence upon minds has been perhaps equal to that of Renan, and still makes itself strongly felt even in his very adversaries.

CHAPTER XV

THE CONTEMPORARY MOVEMENT IN FRENCH PHILOSOPHY

RENAN and Taine addressed the general public. While their books have been admired and widely read, and have served as vehicles for ideas which were destined to become popular, a number of works of a more specially philosophical nature, and therefore appealing to a far less numerous class of readers, have appeared in France, bearing witness to the speculative activity of the country.

At the first glance that we cast upon the latter half of the nineteenth century we are struck with the extreme variety, or, more accurately speaking, with the isolation and apparently fortuitous distribution of theories. There is no powerful and dominant school sufficiently representative of the spirit of the time to rally the great majority of thinking minds, as had been done by Cartesianism, by the philosophy of the Encyclopædists, and even by Eclecticism about the year 1830. Each philosopher, jealous of his independence, follows his own course. Many, out of dislike for quackery and oratorical philosophy, withdraw into a sort of disdainful privacy, which has its advantages as well as its drawbacks. It is certainly to be regretted that

philosophical speculation should seem to confine itself within an "ivory tower," abstaining from intimate intercourse with contemporary life; it thus runs the risk of assuming a formal, narrow, scholastic character, and of bestowing much energy and skill upon problems of purely factitious interest. History shows that this danger is far from imaginary. On the other hand, it is no less dangerous for philosophy to seek avowedly the immediate favour of the public. The reason for this is evident. The philosophers of whom we are speaking have at least escaped the latter peril. Remote from the crowd and unknown to it, unknown for some time even to all but specialists in their own line, there was nothing to disturb the elaboration of their doctrines.

It is also a noteworthy fact that they nearly all began by writing on the history of philosophy. In the eighteenth century, Kant remarked that, being entirely absorbed in his own system, he had no time to familiarise himself with those of others. In the second half of the nineteenth century, on the contrary, nearly every philosopher thinks himself bound, before producing a new system, to be thoroughly acquainted with the previous ones. The history of philosophy had, indeed, just been revived in France by Cousin, and besides, there was a general increase of the feeling of historical solidarity. Was it not natural, therefore, that philosophy, as well as the other moral sciences, should feel the effect of it?

Thus it happens that though there is not found in this period any theory which has given rise to a wide and powerful philosophical current, it remains possible to locate the various doctrines, either in the general course of some great preëxisting current, or at the junction of several.

Apart from Eclecticism and Positivism, it seems that we may distinguish four main currents:

First, a Kantian current, derived in part from Kant's theoretic philosophy, and in part from his moral philosophy;

Second, a metaphysical current, a reaction against Positivism and against critical and relativist doctrines in general, proceeding from the great modern metaphysical systems, and more particularly from Leibniz and Schelling;

Third, an evolutionist current, clearly following Lamarck, Darwin, and Mr. Herbert Spencer;

Fourth and last, a current which may be termed Separatist, and which being more or less directly derived from Comte, is disposed to abandon the old conception of philosophy, and to organize scientific and positive psychology, ethics, and sociology.

This, without counting a great many secondary currents and undercurrents which we should be obliged to characterise, were not this sketch necessarily a very summary one.

Eclecticism is still the philosophy officially taught in France. This prerogative, which assures it a positive influence upon the intellectual devel-

opment of the nation, is harmful to it in other respects. Being subject to considerations of a political rather than a philosophical nature, it has not been possible for the system either to develop or to transform itself. "Eclecticism no longer investigates, it merely teaches," said one of its adversaries (M. Renouvier). Fortunately, intellectual originality never renounces its rights. Aside from M. Vacherot, who did not hesitate to part from the school in order to try to found a new spiritualistic system, there are M. Bouillier, who has written a conscientious history of the Cartesian philosophy, Bersot, the author of ingenious moral essays, and Caro, who produced brilliant critical studies. Frank published a philosophical dictionary to which all the best men of the school contributed; M. Lévêque has applied the principles of Eclecticism to æsthetics.

Paul Janet has employed his clear and sound judgment in the consideration of the most various subjects. Not only did he teach the doctrine of Eclecticism in his *Morale*, and his *Causes Finales*, but he has discussed contemporaneous questions in many works, such as *Le Cerveau et la Pensée*, *La Crise Contemporaine*, and has made important contributions to the history of philosophy, such as *L'Histoire des Idées et des Théories Politiques*, *L'Histoire de l'École St. Simonienne*, and a biography of his master, V. Cousin, in which he has established the truth on several important points. M. Janet has been a rare example of perfect fidelity

to the doctrine he had adopted in his youth, united with a broad sympathy for all attempts to establish new theories. His respect for philosophical liberty, which he does not separate from other kinds of liberty, permits him to be at once extremely dogmatic and yet sincerely impartial towards his adversaries, the fiercest of whom have always been willing in the end to do him justice.

"Eclectic spiritualism" had none the less to contend against an opposition growing in strength and number, which was more hostile to its method even than to its conclusions. M. Renouvier reproached it with having neither a clear and consistent method, nor sincerity, nor precision; with borrowing its dogmas "from theological traditions which have now become pure conventionalities," and with being afraid of logic. Other equally severe attacks have been repeatedly directed against it. Especially after the death of Cousin, Eclecticism constantly lost ground. Indeed, more than one philosopher whose metaphysical convictions were not really very different from those of Eclecticism, honestly felt compelled to combat it in order to establish his own views.

On the other hand, whilst the spirit of Positivism was constantly gaining new influence and spreading by a thousand channels through the mass of the nation, the adherents of the system properly so called did not increase in numbers. The peculiar style and the extravagant pretensions of Auguste Comte's later works had done great injustice to the

very essence of *La Philosophie Positive*, with the original text of which few people were acquainted. The schism in the school and the quarrels which ensued had also produced an unfortunate impression. Littré, the best known standard-bearer of the doctrine, although a dissenting disciple, was a scientist rather than a philosopher, and if he made clear Comte's copious and prolix thought, we must confess it was at the cost of its richness and depth. Orthodox Positivists, under the guidance of M. Pierre Laffitte, kept close within their church. The time had come for the revival of metaphysical speculation.

This revival, which had already given tokens of its approach before the middle of the century, assumed various shapes according to the predominance in it of the spirit of dogmatic metaphysics, or of the influence of the Kantian criticism. The philosophy of M. Ravaisson belongs to the first class, and is derived in various proportions from Aristotle, Leibniz, and Schelling. According to M. Ravaisson, all philosophical systems may be reduced to three types, which are so many points of view from which the truth is more or less thoroughly perceived. On the lowest stage are the empiric philosophies. They are blind to all that is not revealed to the senses. These systems are not false in their affirmations; but what they deny is infinitely more real than what they take to be the only reality. Above these, on an intermediate

stage, rank the philosophies of the understanding, such as Stoicism and Kantism. They recognise, indeed, that the mind has its proper activity, but they believe it incapable of rising above certain insurmountable barriers, such as time, space, causality, and there they stop. Lastly, on the summit, are the systems of metaphysics which have understood that sentient and even discursive knowledge would not be possible did there not exist an intuition of the reason, in which real being, the absolute, reveals itself without any intermedium, and by which reason is united to the absolute as to the perfect principle of all existence, of all knowledge, of all beauty, and of all force. To this system are added a philosophy of nature which shows the eternal ascent of imperfect beings towards the all-perfect being who is both their cause and their end, and a philosophy of history which sees in religion and art revelations parallel to that of reason.

The philosophy of Secrétan, contemporary with that of M. Ravaisson, is also allied to Schelling's second system, but more closely. It has moral and religious tendencies. M. Secrétan's main effort was to reconcile and even to identify with the dogmas of his Christian belief the metaphysical conclusions which result from his speculation. He was a Protestant and accordingly enjoyed the liberty necessary to treat such questions. He speaks as a theologian no less than as a philosopher when he touches upon the formidable problems of the origin of the world, of the divine personality, and of the

explanation of evil. His supreme principle is the idea of God's absolute liberty, which great metaphysicians, such as Descartes, had already affirmed before him. From it he infers the possibility of contingency in the world and of liberty in man.

In the latter part of his life Secrétan had lost much of his interest in such a lofty and abstruse science of metaphysics. Not that he had ceased to believe it true; but he thought it less necessary. Duty, being manifested to the conscience as a categorical imperative, now seemed to him a sufficient revelation of the Absolute. Therefore, laying aside these speculative difficulties which are calculated to make even the most powerful minds dizzy, he directed his efforts to moral and social questions. He felt how serious are the problems set before all Europe by socialism, and sought the solution of these, not as an economist, but as a philosopher and a Christian. Yet it was chiefly his *Philosophie de la Liberté* which exercised upon French thought a slow but deep and lasting influence. This influence is found more or less distinctly permeating the numerous philosophies of liberty which have appeared in the second half of the present century, and is particularly visible in M. Fouillée's teachings.

If Kant's philosophy met with little response in France in the first half of this century, it was not because it was unknown; on the contrary, even in the earlier years of the century we find it mentioned and criticised. But no one had stopped to investi-

gate it thoroughly, either because many thought with Schelling and Hegel that it suffered from being over-subjective; or more probably because, as most eclectic philosophers said, its idealism seemed to end in a sort of scepticism. As Kant denies to human reason the capacity to solve metaphysical problems dogmatically, to demonstrate the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, he is in their eyes a sceptic. All the arguments against sceptics in general hold good against him, and there is no need of paying any further attention to him. So it happened that the first men who began afterwards to study the text of Kant felt as though they were making a discovery. Instead of a negative and sceptical system, they found one of the most powerful efforts ever made by the human mind to measure the scope of its own faculties and to reconcile the demands of science with those of morality. The effect of this discovery was not long delayed; it gave a new impulse to philosophical studies in France, and several original systems appeared, all drawing inspiration from Kant's ideas.

These were chiefly idealistic systems, as had been the case in Germany also. M. Lachelier, for instance, in seeking for the fundamental principles of induction, came to the conclusion that a science of nature would be an impossibility if the laws of thought were not at the same time, as Kant maintained, the constitutive laws of nature. But for all that, M. Lachelier does not adopt the theory of space, time, and categories enunciated by Kant in

the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which concedes to our science only a relative value, and denies to man the knowledge of things as they are in themselves. M. Lachelier, on the contrary, believes that there is a method—i. e., reflexion—by which our thought may contemplate and possess itself in its very essence, and that having reached this point, it has attained to absolute being and has nothing to seek beyond itself. This was a singularly refined form of idealism, which goes beyond Kant and connects with Leibniz; sensible knowledge being conceived, after the fashion of Leibniz, as an obscure form of intellection. The concepts of space and time, instead of being imposed upon human knowledge, as in Kant's system, without our knowing how or why, are deduced from the very essence of thought by an effort of reflexion. Thus a purely idealistic doctrine is propounded, according to which "ideas are given before sensations and laws before facts." After being expounded in lectures given at the École Normale, and summed up in a vigourous and concise little book, this form of idealism had to struggle against the diffuse influence of Positivism, and against the increased favour bestowed upon English Empiricism. It aroused and maintained a taste for metaphysical speculation. Itself a product of Kant's critical philosophy, it occasioned in its turn the production of new doctrines, which owed to it at least their initiative.

Such is the doctrine of M. Boutroux, who, in his remarkably profound book, *La Contingence des*

Lois de la Nature, asked whether the laws of nature were absolutely necessary, or whether they might not admit of some sort of contingency affording scope for the free activity of rational beings. He proved that an absolutely rigourous necessity is inconceivable to our minds; then from a scientific point of view he pointed out further that even the laws of science do not imply the absolute necessitarianism which has been claimed for them. As we consider more complex and richer orders of reality, after the world of inanimate nature the world of life, after the world of life the world of thought and morality, the degree of contingency permitted by the laws of phenomena also becomes more apparent, and liberty at last asserts its presence in man's consciousness. That which is subject to measurement and calculation, which presents an aspect of perfect regularity, uniformity, and necessity, is but the surface of things. At bottom Leibniz's principle of the indiscernible is true; there never are two entirely identical beings or phenomena; no general formula is adequate to the ever-changing spontaneity of reality. But M. Boutroux, who has a thorough knowledge of the great systems of the past, and has thoroughly investigated their evolution, preserves a critical attitude towards metaphysical principles instead of merely drawing these inferences from them. He is alive to the postulates and results of positive sciences, and respectful to experience, even while examining and interpreting

it. He is determined to sacrifice no portion of reality, and to give their due share to facts as well as to ideas, to science as well as to morals.

From Kant again, and in a smaller degree from Hume and from A. Comte, is derived the philosophy of M. Renouvier. His *Essais de Critique Générale* mark an era in the history of French philosophy of the nineteenth century. Like A. Comte and several other vigourous thinkers of the time, M. Renouvier had received his training in the study of mathematical sciences at the École Polytechnique. These sciences, and also his convictions concerning social problems, induced M. Renouvier to study the philosophical questions on which all others depend. He could not be satisfied with the doctrines which were popular in his youth. We have heard how he condemned Eclecticism with the utmost severity. He reproaches Positivism with its empiric dogmatism which will not take the trouble even to justify itself, with its presumption in attempting to "organise science and religion," and to solve in a negative way the question of "possibilities which ought to be the prerogative of free belief." But he accepts this Positivist principle—viz., that our knowledge pertains only to phenomena and the laws of phenomena—a principle, moreover, in accordance with the results of the philosophy of Hume and Kant.

M. Renouvier gave to his doctrine the name of *Criticisme*. It manifests its Kantian origin, both

in basing the solution of philosophical problems on a previous criticism of the human understanding, and in its way of stating the moral problem. But M. Renouvier radically modifies Kant's theory of knowledge. True, he also states that time and space are not realities in themselves, and that our thought operates by means of categories (of which M. Renouvier furthermore draws up a new list.) True, he thence infers, again following Kant, that we know nothing but phenomena, and that in every cognition the part of the mind which knows is inseparable from that of the object which is known. But beyond phenomena, Kant admitted a world of "noumena" (*Dinge an sich*) inaccessible to our knowledge, and yet the foundation of the reality of phenomena. In these "noumena" M. Renouvier sees but a last remnant of the "substances" of the old metaphysics so aptly criticised by Hume and which Kant retained only at the cost of self-contradiction. In accord on this point with nearly all the neo-Kantians, M. Renouvier rejects these "noumena" which Kant himself admitted to be absolutely unknowable. He holds that there is no reality but that given in consciousness.

For a while M. Renouvier inclined towards Hegelianism, and thought that, though to our finite understanding two contradictory propositions exclude each other, from an absolute point of view they may be reconciled, or even support each other. But he soon assumed the contrary position and afterwards made it a rule to consider as false what-

ever he found incompatible with the supreme logical law of our thought, called the principle of contradiction; and he constructed the whole of his philosophy in accordance with the rigourous application of this rule.

For instance, he owed to it the solution of Kant's antinomies; or, rather, he showed that, had Kant observed this rule, he would not have formulated his antinomies. For one ought not to ask whether space is finite or infinite, whether the world had a beginning or not. To say that space is infinite, or that the world had no beginning, is equivalent to admitting that an infinite number is possible and even real. Now, according to M. Renouvier, the realisation of an infinite number is an absurdity, a contradiction in terms; therefore such a number does not exist, and therefore we *must* admit that space is not infinite, that the world had a beginning, that the ascending series of causes has a first term, and consequently that contingency and liberty both have a place in the world of phenomena. Add to this the exclusion of the idea of substance,—which, if once tolerated in a system, leads inevitably to unity of substance, that is, to pantheism and fatalism,—and you have the elements of a system at once idealistic and phenomenalistic, which undertakes to establish, as conclusions of critical study, man's liberty and personality, an order in nature compatible with contingency, and the existence of an author (M. Renouvier for a long time said, of several authors) of the universe.

Does *Criticisme* then, after a long and toilsome circuit, simply come back to the theses of the old dogmatic metaphysics? It would be unfair to say so, though the differences are not so great as one would at first imagine. But the road followed by *Criticisme* is a new one, and M. Renouvier flattered himself with occupying a position that the old metaphysics had never reached. For want of having made a criticism of the human mind, for want of having acknowledged that we know phenomena only, for want of having understood that certitude is but a form of belief and that liberty is implied in every affirmation, these "substantialistic" doctrines were inevitably condemned by the internal logic of their own principles to deny, in spite of themselves, man's liberty and the distinction between God and the world. Phenomenalistic *Criticisme* alone can be logical in affirming these things and in affirming them freely.

With M. Renouvier, even more decidedly than with Kant, the supreme interest is that of action, and therefore the centre of gravity of philosophy lies in morals. In man's conscience is to be found the only really fixed point, the only belief unassailed by doubt, the revelation of the absolute, on which, for us, all the rest depends, and which itself depends on nothing else. The ethics of duty is admirably emphasised in M. Renouvier's works. It is the ever-present inspiration and the very soul and centre of his doctrine. It is this which has

chiefly contributed to give it a firm hold on many of our contemporaries.

Social ethics is treated much more fully in M. Renouvier than in Kant, as might be expected from a former admirer of St. Simon and Fourier. But while rightly recognising the fact of social interdependency and its consequences, he vigourously opposes the Positivist theory of progress, and in a general way, all philosophy of history which tends to fatalism. He regards the complete subordination of the individual to society as a baleful thing. His only hope for the future is from the free and deliberate efforts of the individual. His social ideal is above all one of justice.

After combating for a long time with passionate earnestness the philosophy officially taught in France, *Criticisme* at last made its way into that very official teaching. In more than one case it triumphed now over Eclecticism, which was decidedly out of favour, and again over even the dogmatic idealistic systems. Many university professors in our days adhere to the philosophy of M. Renouvier and of his faithful disciples, MM. Pillon and Dauriac. The summons had been given more than fifteen years ago by M. Brochard in his work entitled *De l'Erreur*. *Criticisme* is clearly the form of neo-Kantism which has been best acclimated in this country. Whatever may be the future of the system, it has at least manifested vigourous life, and effectually contributed to restore the unprejudiced study of philosophy in France.

Opposed in many respects to M. Renouvier's philosophy, there arose another system, the success of which was no less considerable—the system of M. Fouillée, an extremely prolific writer, endowed with inventive imagination and wonderful dialectical resources, his style as easy as that of M. Renouvier is laborious. M. Fouillée has already presented to the public a long series of works, some historical, some dogmatic, and others critical and controversial, in which his doctrines have gradually taken shape. His first purpose seemed to be to substitute for Eclecticism a philosophical synthesis at once very comprehensive and very consistent. Being remarkably well informed on the history of systems and quick at discovering how the constitutive principles of the chief ones among these may adapt themselves to one another, or cover or supplement one another, he sought a higher point of view, whence he might survey all the systems he meant to reconcile. He had studied profoundly the modern philosophies of liberty, but he was no less indebted to the great systems of antiquity, and particularly to the philosophy of Plato, which had been the subject of his first work. One may believe that he found a model for his own system in this broad theory of ideas, into which Plato could introduce all the essential parts of the chief Greek philosophies previous to his own without impairing its harmonious unity.

M. Fouillée acknowledges the advance made by the Kantian criticism over the former systems of

metaphysics; but he does not hesitate to criticise the philosophy of Kant himself, and refuses to accept either his ethics or his theory of knowledge. The leading idea of his own system is the hypothesis of the *idées-forces*. On it he founded his psychology, his ethics, his general theory of nature and society, and lastly a doctrine of metaphysics based on experience.

An idea, according to him, is not a mere representation—that is, a sort of mental reproduction of a real or supposed object outside itself; an idea is at the same time a force working for its own realisation. For instance, liberty is not a reality given objectively, of which we have an idea because we perceive it; but, on the contrary, it is because we have an idea of our own liberty, because we believe in it, because we adapt our conduct to this belief, that we are actually free, and that our freedom is effectual in the world of phenomena. Our ideas and feelings are conditions of real internal change, and consequently factors in mental evolution, not mere signs of an evolution wrought independently of them by exclusively physical causes. Furthermore, every internal change, being inseparable from an external change or motion, produces effects upon the external world, so that ideas, having acted inwardly, at the same time find outward expression with all the resulting consequences. Thus the internal and the external efficacy of mental states are inseparable, because of the fundamental unity between the physical and the mental.

The idea is, therefore, inseparable from action—that is to say, from motion. "It is a form, not only of thought, but of volition; or rather, it is no longer a form, but an act, conscious of its own direction, quality, and intensity." This indissoluble union between thought and action is the all-important psychological law summed up in the term *idée-force*. Not that ideas intervene physically so as to interfere with the universal mechanism. This would represent the *idée-force* as an object endowed with a certain amount of persistent energy. Nothing is further from M. Fouillée's thought. He does not conceive ideas as being apart from one another and endowed each with its individual power. Every state of consciousness is the resultant of a prodigious number of actions and reactions between us and the exterior world, while its correlative is the sum of our cerebrations at any given moment.

From this conception M. Fouillée easily derives a criticism of the theories put forward by spiritualism and materialism on the relation between the soul and the body, then a criticism of the notions of soul and body themselves, and finally the elements of a general theory of the universe, in which the world of motions being conceived as inseparable from the world of ideas, there is established a real monism, the monism of *idées-forces*, superior both to materialism and to idealism. It is easy to understand how the same principle is applicable to the philosophy of history and of law, and to the solution of sociological questions, which were

always of special interest to M. Fouillée. In all these matters he can stand above the empiricist and rationalistic systems which indefinitely oppose each other without either of them ever gaining a decisive victory; he shows everywhere, to use Leibniz's expression, that they are right in their affirmations and wrong in their negations. His doctrine, in short, deals fairly with them in criticising them all, and yet remains different from each of them even at the moment when he identifies it with some aspect of his own theory. This broad spirit of conciliation did not sap M. Fouillée's vigour, and we need only read his *Critique des Systèmes de Morale Contemporains* to feel sure that the weak point of a system cannot easily escape him.

M. Fouillée's philosophy is certainly one of those which best represent the collective aspirations and intellectual needs of the present time. It contains nearly every element of modern thought; the critical spirit which recognises no barriers and claims a right, despite the school of *Criticisme*, to test the very idea of duty; a tendency to adopt the historical and evolutionary point of view; respect for positive science; a taste for social problems; an effort to construct a positive psychology, and to found a science of metaphysics that shall sincerely take into account the modern theories of knowledge. The greatness and inherent interest of such an effort is evident to all eyes; time will show whether a reconciliation between opposite systems is not often achieved by M. Fouillée at the expense of the

integrity of the system which effects the reconciliation, and whether the framework of his philosophy, the conception of the *idées-forces*, is strong enough to support the weight of such a comprehensive doctrine.

We must not separate M. Fouillée from his nephew Guyau, whose genius, prematurely lost to philosophy, he celebrated in touching terms. Guyau, who died at thirty-three, left works sufficiently complete to demonstrate clearly the originality of his mind. It was not his ambition to attempt a conception of the whole universe; he feared that a metaphysical system, of whatever sort, would always be lacking in stability. His efforts were especially directed towards the moral, æsthetic, social, and religious problems which confront man's conscience in our times, the old solutions of which are seldom satisfactory to any conscience which is honest with itself. Guyau thought that a new solution might be sought in sociology. "Guyau's leading idea," said M. Fouillée, "is that of *life* as the principle common to art, ethics, and religion. According to him—and this is the generative conception of his whole system—life, rightly understood, involves in its very intensity a principle of natural expansion, fruitfulness, and generosity. From this he concluded that normal life naturally reconciles in itself the individual and the social point of view." By showing this social aspect of individual life, we might establish at the same time both art and morals on a basis which should hence-

forth be solid. And Guyau hopes for the creation, in the twentieth century, of a social science based on a scientific psychology, the first rudiments of which we behold in our own time. The influence of A. Comte is obvious here; it also appears elsewhere in Guyau's thought, for instance, in his conception of the immortality of the soul. His works nevertheless bear a strongly marked individual character, due both to his passionate earnestness of thought and to the charm of his style.

Few doctrines in the period we are considering contain as many keen, deep, and original views as the works of Cournot. Yet his fame has not extended beyond a very limited circle. There was, indeed, nothing in his style capable of attracting the general public; yet more than one of those who attract the attention of the public have read Cournot and availed themselves of their reading. A prudent, methodical mind, well trained in the practice of the sciences, averse to all hasty generalisation, Cournot tried to determine what we may know of the foundations of our knowledge. Most philosophers have sought the solution of the problem in the analysis of our faculty of knowledge. Cournot followed another method. He carefully investigated each of the sciences which the human intellect has built up in order to gain a better knowledge of the universe and to exercise upon it practical influence; he analysed the principles on which these sciences depended for the establishment

of their laws, and sought to discover whether it were possible by bringing together the principles and methods of the different sciences to obtain a group of fundamental ideas. This group will then constitute his philosophy.

Three ideas are of paramount importance in this doctrine, which shuns all *a priori* deductions and constitutes a system only in so far as experience warrants: these are the ideas of order, chance, and probability. Order exists in the universe. It is the regular recurrence of the series of phenomena that makes it possible for us to acquire a knowledge of their laws, and the faculty of putting the universal order into an intelligible form is what is called in us reason. But this order is not such that we can deduce the laws of phenomena by means of an abstract action of the mind. Induction is necessary to arrive at these laws, and induction does not convey absolute certitude, but only probability, which may be practically equivalent to certitude, but leaves room theoretically for contrary chances. For chance is not a word invented to conceal our ignorance, as has been claimed by philosophers; it is a positive factor in the sum total of reality; it comprises all that results from the concurrence of independent series of causes. Its part in history is undeniable; it is no less so in the evolution of our universe, which may be considered as a sort of history. But whatever be the actual part played by chance, it is a fact that the various series of phenomena occur in a regular way, and that order

exists. The conclusion we are to derive from this must not be more absolute than the principle itself; this order comprises possible irregularities and exceptions; outside the domain of mathematics, we must always make a principle of reserving a place for what may appear without our being able to foresee it. Therefore no science of real phenomena can claim absolute certitude, moral sciences less than any other, and philosophy still less than ethics. Philosophy is merely an attempt to connect what has been taught us by the study of different classes of phenomena, and to conceive order as universal. The controversies of philosophers show sufficiently that several conceptions of this kind are equally possible. Philosophy proceeds naturally from man's reflexion upon science; but it is not itself a science.

This doctrine, clearly akin to Positivism and *Criticisme*, is nevertheless separate and distinct from them, and even emphasizes some of their defects. It warns us against the too often rash affirmations and conjectures in which our reason indulges. But can a philosophy exist that dares not assert itself as a philosophy? May it not be to its extreme cautiousness that Cournot's doctrine owes the relative obscurity in which, despite its rare value, it has remained? A philosophical doctrine can be but a great hypothesis; this may be a weakness, but it is also the main reason for its existence.

We are thus brought to the large category of thinkers who believed that such a hypothesis was

henceforth impossible, and who gave up all attempts to seek for a total and absolute explanation of the universe. Therefore, they abandon the pursuit of essences, causes, and ends. They are still philosophers, but have renounced the name of metaphysician. This positivistic tendency is found in the most various domains.

We must first mention men of science, such as the physiologist, Claude Bernard, and the chemist M. Berthelot, who, while enriching science with valuable discoveries, have also reflected upon the nature and scope of science itself. Independently of his interesting observations on the experimental method in general, Claude Bernard has endeavoured to determine exactly the object of physiological science, and his conclusions agree most strikingly with what Auguste Comte has said on biological philosophy. On the one hand, Claude Bernard disencumbers physiology from the last remnants of metaphysics which were still clinging to it. Science, here as elsewhere, seeks only to know phenomena and their laws. It has nothing to do with a so-called "vital principle" to "explain" those phenomena, which, considered singly, are never other than physical and chemical phenomena, which are identical in living and lifeless bodies. But, on the other hand, Claude Bernard does not mean to "reduce" physiology to physics and chemistry. He is fully aware that this would be equivalent, as August Comte said, to explaining the superior by the inferior. He shows that life has

something specific and irreducible to a physical and chemical mechanism. He emphasises the part played by the "dominating idea," which seems to preside over the evolution of the living being, and the necessity that the biologist who wishes to understand one phenomenon should connect it with all the others that take place at the same time, and even with those which shaped the past life of the creature. In short, Claude Bernard's chief object is to establish the positive character of physiology and its connexion with the other and older positive sciences, yet without infringing upon its separate, original and irreducible character.

M. Berthelot, being equally versed in chemistry and in the history of its beginnings, arrived also at general views not very different from those of the Positive philosophy. He thinks that the progress of science will gradually make a theological and metaphysical attitude untenable. As minds become familiar with the knowledge of natural laws, they become incapable of harbouring superstitions and arbitrary hypotheses. In this M. Berthelot shares the convictions and hopes of the philosophers and scientific men of the eighteenth century. He shows that great changes have already been wrought by the influence of the positive sciences; and yet nearly all of these sciences are just beginning their career, and their influence has only begun to triumph over violent and desperate opposition. What, then, may we not expect from the future, when these sciences shall hold

undisputed sway, and shall have made discoveries beyond all our present dreams, which will probably transform both the conditions of social life and the traditional rules of morality? For the moral sciences are destined to become positive, after all others, it is true, but no less surely.

This last stage seems to have been attained by psychology in our days. M. Ribot, casting aside the semi-literary and semi-metaphysical psychology of the Eclectic school, initiated the study of scientific psychology in France. He is not a Positivist, inasmuch as he does not, like Comte, regard metaphysical investigations as useless and even injurious; he has written an excellent little book on Schopenhauer, and wishes to leave all questions open. But his conception of psychology is in perfect conformity with the positivist spirit. He defines it as a science of facts, the sole object of which is the search for the laws concerning these facts. The psychologist needs not choose between materialism and spiritualism, or decide whether it is the soul that acts upon the body or the body upon the soul: this is the business of the metaphysician.

The psychologist knows the facts from inward observation, and studies them according to the objective method. He does not regard psychical facts as constituting by themselves an order of realities independent of all others; on the contrary, though careful not to say that facts of consciousness are but a phase of physiological facts (an unverifiable and metaphysical assertion which oversteps the

limits of his science), he studies, nevertheless, the facts of consciousness as far as possible, only for the purpose of seeking for and establishing their association with the physical facts of the nervous system. Adding example to precept, M. Ribot has published a number of books in which the keenest psychologic faculty is combined with a strictly scientific method. In each of his works he endeavours to reduce some special laws to one general psychological law which shall furnish the reason for a great many facts. He holds that psychologic science leads to theories which are at least provisionally satisfactory, without being absolutely demonstrated, similar in this respect to the great hypotheses of physics. Following M. Ribot came a whole school of young psychologists who abstain from even such theories, and who apply all their energies to laboratory investigations of a very special and often minute nature. There remains nothing in common between psychology understood in this way and what the Eclecticists or Scotchmen called by that name.

Sociology is far from having assumed such a decidedly positive form. It still retains more than one of the features which according to Comte mark a science yet in the metaphysical stage. Works on sociology are still chiefly devoted to defending the legitimacy, the object, or the method of this science. Those who treat of it rarely take up the science at the point where their predecessors had left it; each of them contributes his own definition of social facts, upsets the edifice raised by the others, and

goes about building a new one. There is nothing surprising in this state of sociology. Social phenomena being the most complex of all, sociology must necessarily be the last science to reach the positive stage. Still, among the very numerous attempts made to organise it, some will certainly be made use of by the science of the future. Such are the works of MM. Espinas, Durkheim, and Tarde, to cite only a few names. M. Espinas comes first in order of date, with a fine study on *Les Sociétés Animales*. M. Durkheim, in his *Division du Travail Social* and in his *Règles de la Méthode Sociologique*, endeavoûred to treat the facts of moral life after the method used in the positive sciences—that is, not only to observe them carefully, to describe and classify them, but to find out in what way they are capable of becoming objects of scientific study, and to this end, to discover in them some objective element which will admit of exact determination, or if possible, of measurement. If the definition of the "sociological fact" were sufficiently exact, the greatest difficulty would be overcome, and social science could then progress rapidly. Like other positive sciences, it would give man "foresight and power."

M. Tarde feels much less strongly than M. Durkheim the need of making sociological investigations rigourously scientific. He studies social phenomena now as a psychologist, now as a historian, and again as a philosopher, the comparative method, broadly and freely applied, being his

favourite procedure. He has given us profound and thorough criticism of Italian theories of criminality, particularly those of Lombroso, and his own *Philosophie Pénale* contains many views which are original, comprehensive, and often suggestive. The same thing may be said of his *Lois de l'Imitation* and most of his other works. Amid the sometimes crowded and rather desultory abundance of his ideas, there are found a number of more systematic, æsthetic and even metaphysical convictions, which now and then make themselves manifest, and give unity to the work.

We are very far from having given even a summary idea of the active contemporary philosophical movement in France. How many interesting works we are obliged to pass over in silence! Let us at least mention, in psychology, under its various forms: Fr. Paulhan (*L'Activité Mentale*, *Les Phénomènes Affectifs*, etc.), Egger (*La Parole Intérieure*),Pierre Janet (*L'Automatisme Psychologique*), Féré (*Sensation et Mouvement*), Binet (*La Psychologie du Raisonnement*, *L'Année Psychologique*), H. Bergson (*Essai sur les Données Immédiates de la Conscience*, *Matière et Mémoire*); in metaphysics, MM. Evellin (*De l'Infini*) and Rauh (*Le Fondement Métaphysique de la Morale*); in logic, MM. Liard (*Des Définitions Géométriques et des Définitions Empiriques*, etc.), Brochard (*De l'Erreur*, *Les Sceptiques Grecs*), Naville (*La Logique de l'Hypothèse*); in moral and religious philosophy, MM. Marion (*La*

Solidarité Morale), Ollé-Laprune (*La Certitude Morale*, *Le Prix de la Vie*, etc.), and Sabatier (*Essai d'une Philosophie de la Religion*); in sociology, MM. de Roberty (*La Sociologie*, *Auguste Comte et Herbert Spencer*, etc.), De Greef (*Les Lois Sociologiques*, *Le Transformisme Social*, etc.), Lacombe (*Les Lois de l'Histoire*), Henry Michel (*L'Idée de l'État*); in the philosophy of the sciences, MM. Delboeuf (*Le Sommeil et les Rêves*, *La Matière Brute et la Matière Vivante*), Hannequin (*Essai sur l'Hypothèse des Atomes*), Couturat (*De l'Infini Mathématique*); in æsthetics, MM. Sully-Prudhomme (*De l'Expression dans les Beaux-Arts*), and Séailles (*Essai sur le Génie dans l'Art*); in the history of philosophy, MM. Adam (*La Philosophie en France au XIX^e^ Siècle*), Tannery (*Pour l'Histoire de la Science Hellène*), Lyon (*L'Idéalisme en Angleterre*, *La Philosophie de Hobbes*), Delbos (*Le Problème Moral dans la Philosophie de Spinoza*), Denis (*Histoire des Idées et des Théories Morales dans l'Antiquité*), and so many others whom we regret not having the space to mention.

The very number of all those we should have cited will be our excuse. True, this philosophical activity, of which the *Bibliothèque de Philosophie contemporaine* gives so many tokens, seems at the same time to be quite desultory and fragmentary. But perhaps we overrate the diversity of the philosophical tendencies of the present time. Perhaps we are labouring under an optical illusion inevitable to those who try to take a general view of contem-

porary events. Probably many an important point of resemblance between doctrines escapes us, because the very spirit of our time, with which we are all imbued, is expressed in these resemblances, while, on the other hand, we take too much notice of secondary differences. The historian in the next century will discern the due proportions, and portray more easily than we can do the leading features of such a complex evolution.

CHAPTER XVI

CONCLUSION

If we cast a general glance upon the three centuries that have elapsed between the birth of Descartes and the present day, two great features are at once perceptible. French philosophy during that period offers characteristics peculiar to itself, and yet it is inseparable from the general evolution of European philosophy; for is it not closely linked with the development of science, and is not this development the common work of civilised nations? The interchange of philosophical ideas has been scarcely less active than that of scientific discoveries. Especially has this been the case between France, England, and Germany. Indeed, more than once each of the three countries welcomed from abroad ideas which had originated at home but a short time before without having attracted much attention. If we were to imagine a sort of international clearing-house for philosophical accounts, we should sometimes see the same doctrine passed in the course of one generation from the debit side to the credit side of one and the same nation.

What really belongs to each nation in this common evolution? It is seldom the very substance of a philosophical doctrine, but rather the stamp of its

peculiar genius, the form and expression given to the doctrine, the expansive force which the thinkers and writers communicate to it. In this sense there is a French philosophy. In the historical sequence of French philosophers continuity is the result of the persistency of a certain number of common features, expressive of the very genius of the nation. Even as in the seventeenth century, the prestige of antiquity and the ascendancy of the literatures of Spain and Italy rather nurtured than stunted the admirable blossom of French literature, so Bacon and Locke in the eighteenth century, and Kant and Hegel in the nineteenth, furnished to French philosophy a rich supply of material which the French mind transformed and by assimilating made its own.

English philosophers, in general, have occupied very diverse social positions, and their minds have been trained in most various studies. Bacon was a statesman, Locke a physician, Berkeley a bishop; in the present century many have been physiologists, others have taken a part in public affairs. We cannot, however, draw from this any indication respecting the character of English philosophy. In Germany, a certain number of philosophers, and among the greatest, began by studying divinity, and this fact was not without its consequences. In France it was mathematics that was first studied by many a great philosopher—for instance, in the seventeenth century Descartes, the inventor of analytical geometry; Pascal, a geometrician and a physicist; Malebranche, a member of the Academy

of Sciences; in the eighteenth, Fontenelle, D'Alembert, and Condorcet; in the nineteenth, August Comte, Renouvier, and Cournot, to quote but a few names. Even among those who are not geometricians, many were deeply interested in mathematics. Voltaire became the herald of Newton in France, and Condillac wrote the *Langue des Calculs*. It is not likely this could have been a mere coincidence, protracted as it was for so long and in such a definite way. It seems allowable to infer, not that French philosophy was based on mathematics, but that there has been in France a close affinity between the mathematical and the philosophical spirit.

Thus, as perfect clearness is an essential feature of mathematics, French philosophy was also fond of clearness. The "philosophy of clear ideas" which, upon the whole, predominated in France under different forms till the end of the eighteenth century, proceeded from Descartes. This philosophy took it for granted that among the various ways of representing reality, there is one which is adequate and is recognisable on account of its clearness and its sufficient "evidence." In this perfectly intelligible representation we have truth at its source, and though henceforth experience is still useful for the confirmation of our conclusions, it is no longer necessary for the acquisition of scientific knowledge. When in possession of the principles, we can deduce the consequences, as is done in mathematics. Thus Descartes undertook to con-

struct the physical universe, if only he were given extension and the laws of motion; thus Condillac undertook to construct the phenomena and faculties of the soul, if only he were given sensation; and thus also did Rousseau construct society, and Auguste Comte the positive religion.

Now, to discover principles, as well as to build upon those principles, method is necessary. Thence, the great importance attached to method by nearly all French philosophers. Is it not to method that mathematics owes its certainty and fruitfulness? The value of science depends upon the strictness of its method. Almost every one of the French philosophers in his turn composed his *Discours de la Méthode*, and ascribed to his method the credit of the advance he believed had been achieved beyond his predecessors. With Descartes method is science itself. With Condillac everything depends upon the judicious use of that analysis which is capable of discovering the process of nature. Lastly, with A. Comte, positive philosophy is achieved by the application of one and the same method to every branch of knowledge. In short, when the method is found, the philosophy is already built. The rest is a matter of execution which may be more or less complicated and difficult, but is not the essential part. In striking contrast with the ways of German thought, which is wont to construct a body of doctrine first and afterwards abstract a method, is that of the French, who shape their doctrines in accordance with their

methods. Here, again, the prevailing need of clearness and intelligibleness is manifest in the latter; only when the process of reflexion is determined beforehand, and sure to reach its mark, does reflexion upon reality appear to them profitable and even possible.

Such a philosophy, the constant ambition of which is deduction, may comprise among its devotees many men who are empiricists in method, but few who are empiricists by temperament. Compare in this respect Locke and Condillac—the one vigilant in following up all the devious ways along which the observation of facts leads him, the other concerned above all else to find the "primitive fact" from which may be inferred all others. But such a philosophy, on the other hand, will scarcely admit of the instantaneous divination of the absolute, the mystical intuition which is superior to reason and which dispenses with logical demonstration. There certainly are French mystics, and very notable ones, but most of them belong to the history of theology rather than to that of philosophy. Those who are philosophers, as St. Martin, Ballanche, and Quinet, have little of the philosophic spirit, and their influence was limited in France, for the precise reason that their outpourings and visions puzzled those minds whom no philosophy that lacks a methodical, rigourous, and lucid form can long allure.

For the same reasons there have been but few very original metaphysicians among French philoso-

phers. They have excelled rather in the philosophy of the sciences and in moral philosophy; also in the study of the feelings and passions, in the analysis of intellectual functions and of the mechanism of political society, and in the systematisation and classification of the sciences. To classify beings or phenomena, to discover their natural bonds and relations, to rise from particular laws to laws as general as possible, was the work to which the majority spontaneously devoted themselves.

By virtue of their undeniable principles and rigourous demonstrations, mathematical truths are accessible to all rational minds. French philosophers, who flatter themselves that they employ a no less rigorous method and attain to the same degree of certainty, claim for their doctrines a universal validity similar to that of mathematics. Thence the attitude peculiar to them. Being persuaded that the truth they have discovered is obvious to every mind that follows a suitable method, they do not write for a limited circle of philosophers and men of science; they pursue, notably in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a sort of intellectual proselytism. Their fancied audience is the whole of mankind, whom they endeavour to convince, and to whom they appeal as judges of the truth of their philosophy.

In consequence, they attempt to eliminate from their philosophy its purely national form, which they think would make the exposition deficient in clearness and obscure the universal character of the

doctrine. In moral and social sciences they study "man" and "society"; and if they deal with a given society, it is always with the intention of separating what is special to one place and one epoch from what is true in all places and epochs. This is a feature common to nearly all French philosophers, to Montesquieu himself, as well as to Auguste Comte. Then, just as they imagine their doctrine extending over the whole upper stratum of the globe, they also seek to go lower down, to penetrate to the mass of the people, being convinced that every rational man, whatever be his social condition, can and must appreciate the truth. French philosophers, as a rule, are desirous of making themselves accessible to all. Descartes set the example by writing his *Discours de la Méthode* in French. The philosophers of the eighteenth century desired, above all else, to be understood by every one in France and all over Europe. In the nineteenth century many thinkers, entirely occupied with social questions, attempted to come into direct contact with the people. Auguste Comte carried on for eighteen years a free public course in popular astronomy so as to help in the intellectual emancipation of workingmen, and it was upon them that he counted chiefly for the success of the Positive philosophy.

This also explains the fact that French philosophers have nearly always taken care to show that their doctrines were in perfect accord with common sense—that is to say, with reason freed from tradi-

tional prepossessions and prejudices—that even their method was no extraordinary contrivance, but a mere application of the rules of common-sense. Condillac expressly says that "nature always begins aright," and all the men of his time repeated this after him. According to Comte, the Positive method is a "systematic extension of popular reason."

A philosophy which thus addressed the whole of mankind could hardly ignore what alone can excite the interest and fix the attention of the immense majority of men—that is, the practical affairs of life and action. And indeed, this philosophy manifestly showed a tendency to make the practical the goal of its speculation, though without subordinating its freedom of investigation exclusively to the idea of immediate utility. Here again mathematics provided a sort of model; applied mathematics has proven all the more useful because pure mathematics has pursued theoretical truth in a more disinterested way. Condorcet, and Comte after him, observed that the first geometricians and astronomers who made it possible to determine longitude were not aware that their discoveries would some day serve to preserve the life of seamen. According to Descartes, ethics, medicine, and mechanics, which are sciences directly profitable to man, cannot bear all their fruits until the theoretical sciences upon which they are based have been fully mastered.

Thus French philosophers generally believe in

the power of man over nature. Whether they be necessitarians or not (and it is among them that we meet with the greatest number of advocates of free will), they are hardly willing to deny that in natural, and above all, in social evolution, man's own volition is a factor which must be taken into account. Descartes expected from science more than we dare hope for now; he thought it would some day prolong the term of life indefinitely. Everybody knows what faith the "philosophers" of the eighteenth century had in the power of education and legislation. And at least in the first half of the nineteenth century, French thinkers were not over-timid in their political and social conceptions. They wished to find in society, as well as in nature, a clear and logical order, justifiable in the eyes of reason; and not finding it there, they tried to establish it. Even the knowledge of history was not always sufficient to warn French philosophers against *a priori* social constructions. The desire for justice being in that case added to the desire for order produced in them an almost irresistible inclination to construct an ideal society, and though their doctrines were often chimerical, they were also, on the other hand, often humane, generous, and suggestive.

To sum up in a word all these characteristics, which, after all, were connected together, there has been in French philosophy for three centuries a singular persistency of the Cartesian spirit; whether

the stamp of the first great modern philosopher was indelible, or whether—which is more likely—Descartes expressed in his doctrine the essential features of the French genius, which caused his influence to coöperate with the tendency of the national temperament. This spirit, which had become predominant by the end of the seventeenth century, was transmitted in the eighteenth through Fontenelle and Montesquieu, prevailed among the "philosophers," and even in Condillac, and spent itself in the French Revolution, to be revived in the nineteenth century, modified, but still recognisable, in Auguste Comte. This spirit was wonderfully adaptable to the task of criticism incumbent upon modern philosophy when once out of the Middle Ages and past the Renaissance and the Reformation. The main object was to definitely separate scientific or philosophical speculation from theology, and to overthrow the entire body of institutions based on a historical tradition which was often indefensible, in order to establish in their place a just system. To this work French philosophy was peculiarly adapted by reason of its rational, universal, and humane character, and of its insistence upon logical clearness.

Historians, for instance, were fully aware of this. Though the "philosophers" of the eighteenth century are not very original, and though they represent, or think they represent, an empiricism of English origin, nevertheless they are acknowledged to be true representatives of the French spirit, and to

have employed in moral and social questions a method similar to that of Descartes. Their talent as writers, their enthusiasm and their zeal for making proselytes, rendered them formidable adversaries of the old system, which they attacked from every point of view. Through them ideas of "return to nature," of justice, humanity and, equality spread triumphantly all over Europe. These ideas were prevalent during the second half of the eighteenth century, meeting with scarcely any opposition. At the end of the century a reaction set in against this philosophy almost everywhere, coincident with the reaction against the French spirit in general in literature and in art, as well as in philosophy. As early as the beginning of the French Revolution the signs of this reaction appeared. New doctrines revealed what was abstract and superficial in the French philosophy of the eighteenth century. They showed that the "humanity" for which this philosophy constructed a society, a political constitution, and an educational system, was nothing but an imaginary body of men as they might have been just after the deluge, having no past, no history, no tradition, no ties to bind them to any country—nothing, in fact, pertaining to an actual and living people. The new doctrines opposed to cosmopolitanism a distinctively national sentiment. They treated history with respect, traditions with consideration, and restored so far as possible what the eighteenth century had destroyed.

It is a remarkable fact that at the very time

when this reaction was triumphing in France, French philosophy drew its chief inspiration from foreign sources — Scotch and German. With Auguste Comte it resumed a national, and at the same time a Cartesian, direction; yet even Comte felt the influence of the traditionalist current. To this influence is due his partiality for Joseph de Maistre, his enthusiastic admiration for the Catholic organisation of the Middle Ages, and his contempt for many of the eighteenth century "philosophers," who, in his opinion, merely completed a task already more than half accomplished, the result of it purely destructive. Since that time French philosophy, in its various forms, has been controlled in part by the spirit of the eighteenth century, persisting in its critical tendency, and in part by the reconstructive movement, which, according to the historian Ranke, is characteristic of our own century. This divided attitude may be one of the causes of its weakened influence over the mass of minds.

Yet, whatever be the political future of civilised nations, significant symptoms already show that "national philosophies" are on the decline. While the French genius, as well as the English and the German genius, has played its special part in the evolution of modern European philosophy, it seems that this part is soon to be reduced to that of merely an important factor in a common development. Already positive science (to which philosophy is so closely allied) knows no frontiers; it is purely international. It is the same with sociology, with scien-

tific psychology, which is cultivated at the same time and by similar methods, in Germany, the United States, England, and France; the same is also true of logic and the theory of knowledge. We are progressing towards a state of things in which there shall no longer be any French, English, German, or American philosophy, but only one philosophy common to civilised mankind. Thus it was in the Middle Ages. Since then, indeed, under the influence of many causes, particularly of the organisation of the great European nations, philosophy, like literature and art, has assumed a national character, and each great nation has had its own original thinkers, as it had its writers and artists. But the day seems at hand when this national character will again be lessened and when philosophy will no longer bear geographical labels.

What will be the part of France in the common philosophical work of the future? An answer to this question would necessarily be daring, since so much depends upon a factor that cannot be anticipated, the appearance of one of those men of genius who carry the human mind a step forward. At any rate, the country which gave birth to such men as Descartes, Malebranche, Montesquieu, Diderot, and Auguste Comte may hope to supply still more leaders to the sacred legion of mankind. But it is perhaps less bold to inquire what direction the evolution of philosophy is likely to take. It really seems as if the old forms of metaphysics—I do not mean metaphysics itself—were tending gradually to

disappear, in spite of the efforts and talent bestowed upon their renovation. Their apparatus for demonstration is outgrown, for criticism in the last two centuries has shown what its faults were, and made it ineffective. But from this very criticism there may issue a theory of knowledge, scientifically established, and from this theory of knowledge, perhaps, a new science of metaphysics.

History teaches us that philosophical revolutions are accomplished only by degrees, and that crises which seem most violent to contemporaries may afterwards assume the aspect of slow transitions. Our time is no doubt a stage of the great transition by which the mind of man is passing on from the state in which religious dogma dominated his thought, to another state, to be realised in the future, which may also be religious, but in which dogma will no longer prevail. In this long struggle for enfranchisement, which is not accomplished consistently or continuously, but which implies spasmodic advances, fluctuations, and recoils, there have been several periods of stagnation. Repeated and serious attempts at reaction have been made in the nineteenth century; but we are justified in believing that these are mere incidents, the historical causes of them recognisable, affecting only temporarily the general progress of human development. Though this development takes place in obedience to laws, the transition from one stage to another is inevitably accompanied by a profound moral and social transformation. This trans-

formation can be achieved only with jars, painful friction, and even violent lacerations, and those who oppose it no doubt fulfil as important an office as those who labour to effect it. The incidents of this strife are reflected in the conflict of doctrines which characterises our time, and of this the present state of philosophy in France presents a faithful picture.

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